# *Private and Royal Life in* THE OTTOMAN PALACE

İLBER ORTAYLI

VISIT...

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# THE OTTOMAN PALACE

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İlber Ortaylı

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# Introduction

Topkapı Palace attracts more visitors than any other place in Turkey. Once the heart of Ottoman administration and the residence of the sultans, the elegantly decorated palace is surprisingly modest. In this work, Dr. Ortaylı introduces us to the different sections in the palace, providing us with information about their functions, architecture and decorations. His references to the palace customs, people, and particular events present us with a living history.

This work has much to offer even for those who have had a chance to visit the palace. Ortaylı's explanations reveal his expertise in the field and certain misconceptions about the Ottomans are corrected. Moreover, this book covers some of the closed sections as well. For example, certain parts of the Harem are completely built of wood and therefore, visitors are not allowed as a precaution against possible damage. Some of these places have been photographed for the first time.

In the name of our company and our readers we would like to express our thanks to everyone who was part of the team in the production of this book: Dr. İlber Ortaylı, the head of the museum and the author of this work, the former manager of the museum, Nurullah Çakır, the assistant manager Gülendam Nakipoğlu, the chief of museum security Mehmet Aydın, Dr. Ortaylı's assistant Selin İpek, the other section experts, curators and all the staff.

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# Preface

Topkapı Palace was the residence of the Ottoman sultans. It was built on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror in 1460, and some additions were made in later periods. Ottoman sultans and members of the court lived here until the mid-nineteenth century. The palace did not suffice for the state protocol and ceremonies of the nineteenth century and Sultan Abdülmecid, son of Mahmud II, did not stay much in Topkapı from the 1830s on. At the beginning of the 1850s, the Ottoman sultans moved permanently to Dolmabahçe Palace on the Bosphorus. However, the treasury, the Sacred Trusts, and the imperial archives were still preserved in Topkapı.

Two years after the Ottoman monarchy was abolished in 1922, Topkapı became a museum. The 12,000 pieces of Chinese and 900 pieces of Japanese porcelain constitute a particularly significant collection in the museum today. In addition, unique collections of Turkish clothing from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, carpets, weaponry, and European porcelain constitute rich displays in the museum. The museum's library of manuscripts contains more than 18,000 original books; these are not only in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, but also in Slavic languages, in Greek, Armenian, Latin, and Hungarian. The section where Mehmed the Conqueror, the founder of the palace, previously lived has now been converted into the treasury. The treasury contains a gift throne from Iran, which is next to the Ottoman throne, various gifts from the Indian Babur period, a holy relic from the Byzantium, countless jewels, and rare pieces such as the famous Kaşıkçı Diamond.

The kitchens are one of the most interesting sections of the Ottoman palace. Some royal carriages are exhibited today in a part of this section. The highest point in the palace is the Tower of Justice, which is next to the

Imperial Council Hall. The middle courtyard near this structure was the place where the Janissaries received their three monthly payments in a great ceremony, often observed by foreign envoys.

The inner palace, comprising the Harem and Enderun, which is considered the abode of the sultan, played a significant role in the course of history. The Enderun is the section where selected recruits were trained for the administration of the state and commanding of the army. They received lessons in theory and also served at the palace; those who served thus knew how to make services run smoothly. A young recruit coming to the palace might leave the palace after some fifteen to twenty years as a general. Strict discipline prevailed in the Enderun Courtyard and dormitories. Today, visitors' favorites, such as the clothing display, the Imperial Treasury, and the Sacred Trusts are in the chambers around this courtyard. The belongings of the Prophet and other holy figures are visited in the Pavilion of the Sacred Trusts or Apartments of the Holy Mantle by people of all faiths.

The Harem was the section where girls and young women taken captive in war or purchased as slaves were educated. Not all of these young women, who were taught how to read and write, dress elegantly, play and compose music, and follow the court etiquette, were intended to be consorts of the sultan. Other high-ranking statesmen also married girls educated in the Harem. For instance, in almost all the neighborhoods of the foremost cities such as Istanbul and Bursa, there would be a woman who had been educated at the palace before marrying a prominent figure from that area. This was the way palace etiquette spread through society.

One of the most important sections of the Ottoman palace is the archives. Almost all the documents about the Ottomans and those about all the sovereign states the Ottomans had relations with can be found here. World history cannot be written accurately without studying these archives.

Topkapı Palace is modest; more significant expenditure in the empire was dedicated to building magnificent mosques, military barracks, bridges, caravanserais, and hostelry facilities for merchants and travelers. Even Sinan, the famous architect of the sixteenth century, only built a single section in the palace. However, wherever it is viewed from, the beautiful pendant-shaped structures of the palace, its glorious tiles, and its lovely setting, which embraces nature, look grand; this is natural splendor. The hundreds of servants and several thousand cavalrymen (six troops) inside led a simple life

free from lavishness.

The fabrics in the museum are the best works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and delicious dishes of Turkish cuisine were prepared in the kitchens. Nevertheless, although the residents had their meals on Chinese porcelain, they lived a modest, disciplined and programmed life in narrow rooms. Even the majesty of the sultan was meant for the outside rather than the inside, for the people would not be fond of a plainly dressed sultan. The ceremonies of the Ottoman palace were spectacular; impressive to foreign guests and Ottoman people. Every week, the sultan emerged from the palace in a magnificent procession to attend Friday prayer in one of the mosques of the city. The petitions presented to the sultan in the palace were in the various languages of the peoples of the Ottoman lands.

At the princes' circumcision ceremonies the palace treated the people generously; several ceremonies and shows would be held. The processions by the guilds were significant. When the army returned home after a victory, a grand parade of proud soldiers with their arms and uniforms would pass through the city.

The Ottoman palace appreciated poetry and music; musicians and poets were always rewarded generously. Every sultan was a specialist in a particular field of the arts. Selim III was a great composer, Ahmed III was a master calligrapher, Mahmud II was both a calligrapher and a musician, Süleyman the Magnificent was a goldsmith, Abdülhamid II was a brilliant carpenter, Murad IV was a sportsman and a meticulous calligrapher, while Mehmed the Conqueror was a poet.

The palace was made up of buildings which were not tall, but elegant. Except for the Tower of Justice and the domes of the Harem, which can be seen from the sea, all the structures are lower than the plane trees in and around the courtyard. The palace extends over a large area, and once upon a time cherished lively orchards and rose gardens; in recent years there have been efforts to revive the palace gardens.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mustafa Yılmaz, who took the photographs, to the editors Salih Gülen and Hasan Hayri Demirel, to the art director Engin Çiftçi, and to Murat Arabacı who completed the design and layout.

*Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror initiated the construction of the Topkapı Palace. The miniature portrait of the sultan by Şiblizade Ahmed painted in 1475.*

# Istanbul as a Historical City

The conquest of Istanbul was a turning point in world history and had effects in the fields of science, art, and culture. The city walls, which had withstood all previous sieges, yielded before the weapons developed under the direction of the young Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II. After 1453, Istanbul became a world capital once again, and it was reunited with a large hinterland, including the Balkans and Asia Minor. The fact that Istanbul was selected to be the Cultural Capital of Europe for the year 2010 was a longdelayed, but well-made decision for this ancient world capital. Perhaps the only other city in the world which is comparable to Istanbul with respect to its historical background is Alexandria.

Istanbul was the first city to have a university in Europe. Theodosius laid the foundations of this institution for the first time with faculties of law and theology. Right after the Ottoman conquest of the city, the Fatih Mosque was designated as a university and called "the Eight Auditoriums."

The old Eastern Roman capital was in a wretched condition when it was seized by the Ottomans. In a short time, Turkish architecture restored it with a new face. When Mehmed the Conqueror first entered the city, he was appalled by the grim picture before him. The sultan did not wish to use the Byzantine palace in the condition he found it. He conceived a new Ottoman city that was in harmony with the historical heritage he had assumed. The new settlement of the business and residential areas of Istanbul conformed with the earlier pattern of Constantinople. Mehmed the Conqueror managed to increase the population of the city through immigration and obligatory relocations (*sürgün*) in order to revive the city's weakened economy. Topkapı Palace never shared the fate of the old Byzantine palace.

The residential areas of Constantinople in the 1400s were mostly deserted. Clavijo of Castile, who passed through Constantinople on his way to his post as envoy to Timur in 1403, reports that a significant part of the city consisted of empty areas, cultivated gardens and fields. Cristoforo Buondelmonti, who drew the oldest known map of the city, describes the ruined and disintegrated condition of the city on his visit in 1419. Bertrandon de la Brocquère writes in 1433 that the city was divided into cultivated areas. Apart from the bureaucratic institutions, palace and business areas at the center, the city was famous for its wooden buildings, gardens and empty fields both in Byzantine and Ottoman times. When one looks at the historical plan of the city one is struck by how much it reflects the best features of the traditional layout for a town. The administrative area, ports, business areas, and dwellings also reflect this traditional layout.

The great column capitals in front of the palace archives are from the Byzantine period. Likewise, the column capitals in front of the place where the palace carriages are exhibited belong to the Byzantine Period. Some column capitals and columns belong to the palace area, and others were brought there from different areas of the city on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror.1 There has been no systematic archeological excavation within Topkapı Palace, and it does not seem likely for the time being. Such an excavation may reveal some ancient findings. In addition to the Gothic column and two chapels, there are some surviving Byzantine cisterns. An excavation might unearth new items from the Byzantine period.

## The New Palace

Mehmed the Conqueror first built a palace in Beyazıt after his victory. The courtyard of that palace covered a large area, including the main campus of what is now Istanbul University and Süleymaniye Mosque. That palace was known as the Old Palace, and Topkapı later became the New Palace.

The Tiled Pavilion (Çinili Köşk) was built here first, and the palace was constructed later. The sultan then moved into the New Palace. Different names have been given to this palace; the name Topkapı began to be used in much later periods. At this time, interestingly, beginning from the nineteenth century the palace was named after another palace near the coast, which does not exist today. Mahmud I had a wooden palace built near the old Byzantine city walls; this was called Topkapusu (Gate of Cannons) after the salutation

cannons which stood in front of it. This palace was destroyed in a fire, and its name was then used to refer to the main palace—Topkapı (Cannongate).

Topkapı Palace was both an administrative center for the Ottomans and the residence of the sultan. The same spot where the palace is located was once the heart of the Byzantine administration; the Ottoman palace was built upon the ruins of the ancient Roman palace. It is known that the remaining stones and pillars of the old Byzantine palace were used in building the new one. An ancient Byzantine cistern (Yerebatan Sarnıcı) on the road to the palace still survives. The gigantic pillar heads in the kitchen section once supported Justinian's column monument in front of Ayasofya (Haghia Sophia). There are other examples of surviving Byzantine works such as the Baptism Font in the Tulip Garden. The Ottomans did not try to destroy the works of other civilizations; they were accommodating toward the historical heritage of humanity.

This fascinating palace may be the most unusual royal residence in the world. Topkapı can also be considered a monument representing the state. It is modest and striking, but above all very beautiful. The choice of location is excellent, and when viewed from the sea the palace is very imposing. As intended, it brings grandeur and modesty together. Most works of the Ottoman period are far more majestic and much richer than Topkapı Palace. The great architect Sinan built a great many mosques in the name of people from the palace, but he only built one single section of this palace. The palace was always to remain modest.

Ayasofya, which remained unparalleled for centuries, is a symbol of the conquest and the most significant historical mosque in the city. In past times, it was the greatest, most glorious and celebrated place of worship on earth. Mehmed the Conqueror did not change the name Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia). The survival of Ayasofya up until our time can be attributed to the fact that palace protocol gave priority to this mosque. It was most natural for the Ottomans to build the palace near Ayasofya.

The palace stands in Sarayburnu, which can be translated as "cape of the palace." This spot overlooks the city and the palace could be seen from all around. Unfortunately, tall buildings block the view today. The palace area is not far from the Hippodrome—Sultanahmet Square. The choice of location by Mehmed the Conqueror was sensible. The dwellings of the statesmen were mostly in the vicinity of the palace. For instance, the mansion of the famous

grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was located in the area where Sultanahmet Mosque now stands. Opposite this mansion was the palace of Maktul (or Makbul) İbrahim Pasha—what is now the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts.

One important point to be underlined is that, as in all other traditional cities, there were few specific buildings for state offices institutionalized at the center of the administration until the nineteenth century. The exceptions were the offices of the grand vizier, the chief admiral, and the head of the Janissaries. Even the *kadı* (chief administrator and judge) used his own house as his office and courtroom.

Religion had an undeniable role in the Ottoman administration. The sultan, as a Muslim sovereign and caliph of Islam, was the leader of all Muslims. In this respect, the elegance and modesty of Topkapı Palace reflects both the sultanate and the caliphate. In addition, the palace bears importance for Christians in some respects. For instance, the forearm and a fragment of the skull of John the Baptist are kept in the palace.

## The Plan of Topkapı Palace

The Ottoman perception of the state and its relations with its citizens played a significant role in determining the plan of the palace, which developed and grew throughout the centuries. It is known that Murad II, the father of Mehmed the Conqueror, had the Edirne Palace (now in ruins) built near the River Tunca, and this had an influence on the plan of Topkapı Palace. Topkapı Palace consists of state offices built around the courtyard gardens, sections for the sultan's use, and dormitories where the palace residents lived. The buildings are distributed over a wide area.

The palace differs from other palaces in the East and West in its different sections: the elegant but modest kitchens, the Council Hall, which witnessed the rise of an Empire, the Revan and Baghdad pavilions, which reflect the tragic, stormy, but gentle inner world of Murad IV, the chamber of the heir with its celebrated tiles, and the Golden Passageway, which witnessed some fascinating events in history.

Entrance to the First Courtyard is through the Imperial Gate. This gate is near the Fountain of Ahmed III, one of the symbols of the Tulip Period, and is a bit plainer than the other gates. The Gate of Salutations (just after the ticket

booths) opens to the state's center of government. Only the sultan himself could proceed on horseback after this gate. The third gate, the Gate of Felicity, was the entrance to the inner palace where the Harem is located. The Harem was the home of the sultan; above all, it was a school for ladies. The Mecidiye Pavilion was the first structure built in the nineteenth century. This beautiful structure was built for Sultan Abdülmecid who took great delight in watching the sea; he also had a mansion built in the yard of Sultan Selim Mosque overlooking the Golden Horn (Haliç).

The courtyard covers an area of approximately 700,000 $m^2$, with 80,000 $m^2$ of this area being occupied by buildings. The remaining area was given over to the royal gardens. The gardens, which reflected the Ottomans' aesthetic taste, were full of beautiful flowers, particularly tulips. The sultans found relief in the gardens when wearied by the problems of the vast lands they ruled over three continents.

More than its opulence and magnificence, what needs to be emphasized about Topkapı Palace is the wealth of the characteristics and traditions that are totally characteristic of this place. The palace embraces Ottoman history, as if it were the family hearth. Even when the sultans did not reside in Topkapı Palace, their funerals and the princes' circumcision ceremonies were held here. The palace represents a certain tradition, and life inside followed a historical line that needs to be understood. Topkapı Palace tells us much about Ottoman civilization in its own language.

## The Sultan as the Host of the Palace

The Ottoman sovereign was known by the title "Sultan." This was first used by the Seljuks after they conquered Baghdad and allowed the Abbasids to retain the caliphate; the Seljuks' share was the worldly sultanate. The Ottoman sultan was addressed by this special title, just like the Russian Tsar or German–Austrian Kaiser. In the Ottoman dynasty, the sons of a sultan were addressed by the title Şehzade, whereas the daughters were addressed by the title Sultan following their names (e.g. Ayşe Sultan); this latter title can be translated as "imperial princess." The dynasty followed a paternal lineage. The children of a prince belonged to the dynasty, but the children of a princess did not belong to the dynasty, despite being of noble descent. Members of the dynasty could not engage in trade or join another professional group except for the army. This tradition continued until the end of the monarchy.

During the first two centuries of the empire, princes were sent to govern one of the near chief administrative units (*sanjak*) so that they could gain experience in state affairs. When the sultan died, the high-ranking statesmen would agree on one of the princes and invite him to ascend the throne. A prince who kept good relations with the central viziers, who made positive contributions to the army in a military campaign, who demonstrated successful leadership, and so proved to be a capable prince was likely to be selected immediately upon the death of the sultan. There were some exceptional cases such as Bayezid II and his brother Cem, but most of the time, the matter would be settled by agreement. Undoubtedly, some princes were executed owing to the inefficient practice of the enthronement system, as happened during the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III. However, this was not a rule, and it cannot be generalized for the whole of Ottoman history. Execution of other princes was peculiar to a certain period. Beginning with Ahmed I, the princes were not sent to *sanjak*s but were educated at the palace instead. The sons of the dynasty only established direct contact with society in the nineteenth century. During the Second Constitutional Period, certain princes were educated at prestigious schools like Galatasaray, or at military schools, and even foreign military schools in Berlin and Vienna; all of them were competent soldiers.

Some of the sultans were dethroned by rebellions, but the Ottoman dynasty never ceded the throne. There were certain rulers with administrative autonomy, such as those in Hungary and the Crimea. These local dynasties governed their areas but were subordinate to the Ottoman sultan. They paid a regular tax and provided military support if needed. They had to follow Ottoman policies in their international affairs.

The Ottoman sultans held the title of caliph, like earlier Muslim sovereigns. Indeed, they had held this title prior to the reign of Selim I, but his conquest of Egypt and the Hejaz region highlighted the fact. Once, Selim I was mentioned in a sermon as the “ruler” of the two sacred cities, Mecca and Medina, whereupon he spoke up and corrected the word to “custodian.” Until

the end of World War I, the Ottomans did their best to serve pilgrims to Mecca who came from all over the world. The caliphate was abolished in March 1924 and all the living members of the dynasty had to leave the country. An amnesty was issued for the women in 1952 and for the men in 1974.

## Frugality

Much has been said about the pomp of the Ottoman palace. Stories of extravagance in the palace and tales about the Harem are exaggerated works of imagination. Visitors who had the opportunity to see the palaces of Europe and Russia can make a comparison and see the difference. Even the expenditure of the nineteenth-century Ottoman palace was relatively humble. In Ottoman society, neither viziers nor other officials lived in showy residences. Even the famous grand viziers of the empire such as Rüstem Pasha, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, and Siyavuş Pasha did not possess glorious palaces or living quarters. The same can be said about the spiritual leaders, including the Ottoman Christians. The Greek and Armenian patriarchs never had magnificent winter and summer palaces.

## Sections of the Palace

The Ottoman Palace had three main divisions: the outer palace (Birun), the inner palace (Enderun), and the family quarters (Harem). Spaces and events were organized according to this overall plan. Topkapı Palace has three main gates, four courtyards, the Harem, the rose garden (gülhane), and other gardens. The palace is surrounded by sea on three sides. The high walls around the palace stretch for 1,400 m.

The palace was not built in its present form all at once; sections built at different times make up what is now called Topkapı Palace. Particularly as the state grew larger during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, the number of officials increased, and the buildings had to be extended. There were some additions to the original palace built by Mehmed the Conqueror at the times of Murad III and Mehmed IV as well. In spite of having been built separately, the structures complete the picture. Together with Ayasofya and the Blue Mosque, Topkapı Palace is a great contribution to the overall view. However, not all the palace buildings have reached our day; some of them have fallen into ruin, and some of them have burned down.

*View of the historic peninsula of Istanbul within the city walls at the time of Sultan Murad III, Hünername, vol. I, 1584.*

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1 For further information, see: Tezcan, Hülya, *Topkapı Sarayı ve Çevresinin Bizans Arkeolojisi* (Byzantine Archeology of Topkapı Palace and its Surroundings), TTOK, Istanbul: 1989.

**BIRUN**

# THE OUTER PALACE

*Ottoman soldiers standing guard at the Imperial Gate (circa 1895)*

# The Imperial Gate and the First Courtyard

The Imperial Gate was constantly guarded, and it marked the beginning of the palace area. However, admission was not very difficult. Those who came for official purposes or to visit their relatives in the palace could easily pass through after a short interrogation. They could then meet their relatives or pursue their official errand with the relevant bureau. Another reason for the ease of admission was the existence of the Deavi Bureau—which no longer exists. Here the people handed in their petitions to the court. The staff of the Deavi Bureau worked under the supervision of one of the viziers. The petitions which were submitted here are very valuable sources for historians. It is unfortunate that the majority of these has not reached us today.

Inscribed on the gate are verses from the Qur'an (Hijr 15:45–48) about Paradise inscribed on the gate:

> *The God-revering, pious ones are surely in Gardens and water-springs,*
> *(And it is said to them): "Enter you here in peace, perfectly secure!"*
> *We strip away whatever there is in their bosoms of rancor and jealousy.*
> *As brothers face to face, (they take their ease) on couches raised.*
> *No sense of fatigue ever touches them, nor are they ever asked to leave.*

The verses are worked into a symmetrical pattern with their mirror image. They are examples of very beautiful artistry and are most meaningful for the palace entrance. On the other side of the gate above the monogram of Sultan Abdülaziz, another verse is written:

> *And yet another (blessing) which you love: Help from God and a near victory soon to come. Give glad tidings to the believers.*

(Saff 61:13)

This was alluding to the army leaving the palace on a campaign. The gate was built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, and it faces the Sultan's Gallery, where the sultans prayed in Ayasofya. When they wished to go to Ayasofya for the Friday, Tarawih, or Eid prayers, the sultans would pass through this gate. The gate has undergone restoration at various times. The engravings on the gate feature a mansion which was later destroyed by fire.

In Ottoman times, almost all structures had epigraphs. The epigraph for this gate, which was written by Ali ibn Müridi, reads:

> This blessed castle has been built, with the support and good pleasure of God, in order to maintain security, on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror—may God render his reign eternal and make his abode higher than the North Star—who conquered Constantinople, son of Sultan Murad who was the son of Sultan Mehmed I, the sultan of lands and sovereign of seas, the shadow of God over men and jinn, the agent of God in the East and West, the hero of water and earth, in the blessed month of Ramadan in 883 ah [i.e. 1478 ce].

After the Imperial Gate are the Church of St Irene and the old palace workshops. These old components of the palace represent a tradition dating back to Roman times. The workshops carried out crafts like carpentry, bookbinding, book gilding, and leatherwork. Gifts to be sent to other countries were also prepared here. When the palace was abandoned in the nineteenth century, these workshops became the royal mint. The Church of St Irene was once used as an arsenal. At the time of Fethi Ahmed Pasha, it was converted into an archeological museum, and then into a military museum. Today, annual music festivals are held in the building.

*View of the First Court at the beginning of the twentieth century*

*Water Fountain of Sultan Ahmed III in front of the Imperial Gate (circa 1900)*

*The Gate of Salutation opening onto the heart of Ottoman bureaucracy (circa 1900)*

# The Gate of Salutation and the Second Courtyard

## The Gate of Salutation

The Gate of Salutation indicates the respect which is due to the state. Also called the Middle Gate, this gate with two towers has become the symbol of Topkapı Palace. The gate was first constructed at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, and repairs were made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The epigraph on it reveals that it was repaired in 1758. Above the gate the Muslim proclamation of faith is written in an excellent example of calligraphy. Today, this has become the entrance to the museum. On the inner face of the gate another verse from the Qur'an describing Paradise is inscribed:

*...gardens of perpetual bliss whose gates are wide-open to them.*

The two towers at the sides belong to the period of Süleyman the Magnificent. The room of the head gatekeeper, where foreign envoys were received until they were allowed to enter the palace, is within the extensions of this building. In this respect, the ground floor of the towers served as a kind of waiting room.

On passing through this gate, even the grand vizier had to dismount his horse. Only the sultan could pass on horseback, and the ladies of the court would pass in carriages. The only known exception is Ivaz Mehmed Pasha who, by a special courtesy from Mahmud I, passed through the gate on horseback.

## The Second Courtyard: The Divan Square

The Gate of Salutation opened to a smaller but more active courtyard where a stately grandeur made its presence felt. The Imperial Council (the Divan) was the heart of Ottoman bureaucracy; it was here under the Tower of Justice, that the council convened.

*Aerial view of the Topkapı Palace*

To the right, we see the palace kitchens where more than 12,000 items of china are exhibited. The cooks' mosque is a charming wooden structure beside the kitchens. Since the 1920s, the mosque and the adjacent section have been used as the archives where documents about the palace and correspondence with foreign states are kept. The carriages exhibited on the right were not actually used in Topkapı Palace; they belong to the nineteenth century when the dynasty had already moved.

A great many columns and column capitals can be seen in this courtyard. It is believed that they were brought to the palace from all around the city on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror. There are also the remnants of a Roman cistern; water supply has been a challenge for the city ever since the earliest periods.

During the reign of Ahmed III, the Sukhumi Fortress was built in Abkhazia, Georgia. When it became apparent that the fortress was going to fall to enemies, the epigraph was brought to Istanbul. It was later placed in the Second Courtyard. The monogram on the epigraph belongs to Abdülhamid I.

The Harem is located to the left; between the entrance of the Harem and the Divan were the offices of the clerks, where records of the council were made. The Exterior Treasury is also here and is used for exhibiting weaponry, while the Beşir Ağa Mosque is located in the left-hand corner after the entrance. A passage near the Royal Stables, which are used as a gallery for thematic exhibitions, leads to the Archeology Museum. At the entrance, a detailed wooden model of the palace can be seen; it helps to understand the palace layout better.

**The Former Treasury Office: Exterior Treasury**

The structure with eight domes near the Council Hall was the treasury. It was first built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, but the epigraph is missing. Earlier there was no direct entrance from the courtyard into the treasury; a new entrance was made through one of the windows during renovation.

Expenditure such as paying the salaries of the Janissaries every three months, financing the Surre caravans (royal gifts for Mecca and Medina), distributing gratuities after a new sultan was crowned and the like were financed from this treasury. As the state grew weaker, the treasury was emptied and ordinary objects began to be kept where once only money and precious stones had been found. Documents which had been preserved in sacks for centuries were transferred to the Babıali in the Constitutional Period. Today, this building is used as the weapons section.

**The Marker Stone of Selim III**

The vertical stone sunk into the ground outside the treasury marks a particularly successful shot with rifle by Selim III. The sultan intended to reform the army and established a new branch called the Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order). These soldiers were trained in Levent, and the sultan himself inspected their training. The Ottoman sultans were good marksmen. The inscription declares that the sultan hit a jug from a long distance. The marker stone was erected in memory of that event. Similarly, an epigraph on the former treasury building narrates that Ahmed III struck an egg from a distance.

*The marker stone of Selim III*

*Grand vizier having dinner with European ambassadors at the Imperial Council painted by Jean-Baptist Hilaire (Tableau Générale)*

# Ceremonies in the Divan Square

## Soldiers' Payment: Ulufe

The most famous ceremony held in the Divan Square was the payment of the soldiers. Every three months, the Janissaries would fill the square and receive their pay. The cheers could be heard everywhere. The sultan would deliberately receive foreign envoys on these days, making a display of Ottoman military power. First the soldiers were offered soup, and they received their salaries afterwards. In later periods, the Janissaries' refusal to drink soup became a sign of rebellion. The first member of the first troop was the sultan himself. Rice, meat, and dessert were offered in addition to the soup in order to motivate the soldiers, on the orders of Süleyman the Magnificent. This became a tradition from his reign on.

A beautiful Ottoman tradition preceded this ceremony: first, some money would be set aside to be donated to the poor, and then the soldiers would be paid.

## Reception of Foreign Envoys

Foreign envoys were received in the Divan square at the time of the payment of the soldiers. The soldiers would take up position in splendid order with all their grandeur, the infantry on the right and the cavalry on the left. Carpets and other valuable fabrics would hang from the porticos. The lions and tigers in the palace would be walked around. All these completed the picture to convey an awe-inspiring image of the Empire. The gifts brought by the envoys were displayed to the left of the Gate of Felicity. The visiting delegation would be met by a commission of viziers presided over by the

grand vizier. The sultan would never come out to meet the delegation. He did not have to allow the envoys into his presence. If the sultan received the envoys, they would be taken to the Audience Hall.

## The Baklava Procession

The Baklava Procession was a beautiful example of the Ottoman Ramadan traditions. It was a treat from the sultan to the soldiers. The baklava was prepared in the palace kitchens. A large tray of the dessert was made for each group of ten from the different troops of the army. The baklava trays, covered with cloths, would be placed in front of the kitchens. The arms bearer (*silahdar ağa*) and his team would step forth and take the first tray in the name of the sultan, who was considered the first Janissary. Then, two soldiers from other groups would take a tray each. The soldiers would leave the palace, the superiors in front and the tray bearers behind. They would march to the barracks accompanied by the applause of the people who had gathered to watch the procession. The following day, the trays were returned to the kitchens.

*The Tower of Justice next to the Imperial Council Hall in the Second Courtyard*

# The Imperial Council Hall

The Council Hall on the second courtyard indicates the worldwide prestige of the state. This modest place, which once used to be the center of the superpower of the world, was built in the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. The structure consists of three domes. The council hall was seriously damaged during the Palace Fire in 1665 and Mehmed IV had it almost completely rebuilt. The hall underwent restoration in later periods, and the relevant records can be found in the epigraphs on the outer wall.

The Palace Fire in the seventeenth century was a very important event; after the fire several wooden structures were rebuilt in marble. For instance, there were wooden pillars in the first courtyard and some under the porticos in the Enderun Courtyard. They were all replaced by marble. Some sections inside the Harem were also rebuilt in marble after the fire. The greatest changes Topkapı Palace underwent were after this fire.

The portico around the structure sits on arches that rest on eleven columns made of marble and green porphyry. There are splendid penwork decorations on the ceiling of the wooden shelter. The wide shelter and elegant window bars reflect the architectural features of the Tulip Period. The large dome and windows provide a light-filled room for the members of the council. The dome and the arches represent the classic elements of decoration at the time of Süleyman the Magnificent. Classic decorations of the seventeenth century can be seen near the center of the dome.

The ink holder (*divit*) room belonged to the grand vizier. The clerks of the council were under the command of the chief clerk (*reisülküttab*), who was granted extensive authority in later periods of the empire. There is a partition between the second and third domes; his was set aside for these clerks. The

area right under the third dome was the office (*defterhane*) where the financial records were kept. This section was sealed with the stamp of the sultan held by the grand vizier at the end of the meetings.

*Miniature depicting the Imperial Council (Divan) meeting held at the Council Hall. The sultan is following the council meeting from behind the window upstairs, and the preparations are being made outside in the Divan Square.*

The Tower of Justice is the highest spot of the palace and named after the highest principle of the state. It was also restored after the fire of the seventeenth century. The Balyans, the famous family of architects, rebuilt it in its present form in the nineteenth century. The aghas of the Harem kept a round-the-clock watch from 45-meter tower. Although it is adjacent to the Council Hall, the tower had a separate entrance from the Harem side. The sultan would use this entrance and watch the council meetings through the window upstairs, which has a wooden grate that screened the sultan.

## The Council Meetings

The council was formed at the time of Orhan Bey, and it was the major institution responsible for all state affairs. The council was held wherever the sultan resided. The seats of the members were arranged according to protocol rules. The grand vizier and other viziers would be seated opposite the door. On Fridays, the council served as the high court of appeals, and this was the busiest day.

### Meetings of the Imperial Council

The council meetings were held in the Council Hall. The council governed the empire in the real sense; it was not just a body of high bureaucrats. Ottoman law did not define the functioning and duties of the council in a strict or inflexible way. In the sixteenth century the Imperial Council gathered four times a week, whereas in the eighteenth century the council hardly gathered even once a week. The council decided when to go to war, and all the

decisions had to be approved by the sultan. The sheikhulislam (the leading religious authority) would issue a ruling for religious approval.

In the early periods of the state, the sultan himself presided over the council. It is narrated that at the time of Mehmed II, prior to the conquest of Istanbul, a *dervish* (member of a religious order) made his way to the council and asked, "Which of you is the sultan?" The state had grown into an empire and such behavior could not be tolerated. Beginning with Mehmed II, the sultans transferred the presidency of the council to the grand vizier. The sultan would follow the meeting behind the grille of the window. In certain cases, the sultans dispersed meetings by rapping with their staff, but hardly ever by speech. Monitoring of council meetings was not peculiar to Ottomans; Spanish kings and Russian tsars had similar practices. The decisions made were written in the record book (*mühimme defteri*). These records have been published by the Ministry of Culture.

The meetings would begin right after council members had prayed in Ayasofya. Beginning work after the dawn prayer was a common Ottoman tradition. Markets and other centers opened in the same way. The council members would walk to the palace, escorted by the chief gatekeeper. When they approached the Gate of Felicity, the second vizier would step forward and salute the Gate of Felicity in front of the salutation stone and then join the group again. Members like the military judges (*kazasker*), provincial treasury chiefs (*defterdar*), the chief clerk and the clerks would stand in two rows facing one another and wait for the viziers. The viziers would enter the hall together and greet them. Then, everybody would take their seats and wait for the grand vizier in accordance with protocol. When the council was ready, the grand vizier was invited from his office, and he would come to the palace with his retinue. The viziers would sit to the right of the grand vizier and the military judges to the right. The provincial treasury chiefs would sit near the entrance, and the *nişancı* sat facing them.

Before the meeting began, the imam or muezzin from Ayasofya would recite the chapter Fath (Victory), from the Qur'an. The seal on the records office would be broken, and the record books to be used would be brought out. There were four viziers who ranked after the grand vizier. The number of viziers changed in later periods. The head of the Janissaries did not join the council if he had not been promoted to the rank of vizier. The chief admiral was a permanent member. The military judges of Anatolia and Rumeli were

also prominent members. They were responsible for the judicial system, and they were responsible for all the regions outside the capital city. The *nişancı* was another important bureaucrat. He was responsible for the management of the Ottoman land system and held the monogram of the sultan. Ottoman *nişancı*s of the seventeenth century were highly skilled scholarly and literary figures. One such was Celalzade Mustafa, who became famous for his two history books written in literary style. Reading some of the decrees he wrote is good practice of sixteenth-century language and literature for history students. The chief assistant of the *nişancı* was the chief clerk. Under the command of the chief clerk, there were translators who stood ready to serve when foreign envoys were admitted to the council or if foreign affairs were under consideration.

The sheikhulislam was not a member of the council. It was only after the Tanzimat that the sheikhulislam joined the council, and he ranked after the grand vizier. However, he did not join the Imperial Council in the classical Ottoman age. There were Christian officials titled Fenerli Bey. These officials were not all of Greek origin, as many people believe. They came from Romanian, Bulgarian, Christian Albanian, and Italian families too. There were even descendants of the people who had settled in Constantinople after the Western Crusaders' invasion and the sacking of the Byzantine capital in the thirteenth century.

The second step in the decisions of the council took place in the Audience Hall. When the council meeting was over, the viziers would give an account of the council to the sultan. If the sultan confirmed the decisions, they were enacted.

## Namazgah

A *namazgah* was usually an open spot spared for soldiers to pray while on military campaigns. Very few of them have reached our time. The first thing that struck the eye in the second courtyard used to be a namazgah, where there is now a flowerbed. Except in winter, the doorkeepers would pray here in congregation. The stone that marks the direction of prayer displays the beginning of a Qur'anic verse, which is commonly written on the prayer niches (mihrab) of mosques. It can be translated as follows: *"Whenever Zachariah went to her (Mary) in the Sanctuary…"* (Al Imran 3:37). It is a reference to Mary's life of worship and dedication to God.

# The Palace Kitchens

Meals for everybody in the palace, which was almost as great as the population of a small town, were prepared here. A daily average of 5,000 people ate in the palace. The number amounted to 15,000 at special times like the soldiers' payment days or enthronement ceremonies. The meals were not only for the palace's residents; they were served to everyone, including the petitioners, witnesses and whoever else came to the palace. Some of the meals were distributed outside the palace as well. As a result, the kitchens of the Topkapı Palace are larger than those of their European counterparts.

The first structures of the kitchen were built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. Later on, they were extended, but a fire destroyed most of the kitchen section in 1574. The great architect Sinan rebuilt the sections that had burned down. There are three doors along the long portico of the kitchen section. The first one opens to the larder, the second one to the royal kitchen, and the third one to the desserts section.

*The meal for t The photo encapsulates a section of the incomparable collection of ceramics and porcelains exhibited in the Imperial Kitchen during the early years when the palace was converted to a museum. he Harem was cooked separately. As a precaution against possible assassination attempts, the sultan's meal was first tasted by the cooks, and then by the royal taster.*

Interestingly, the kitchen staff took part in some historical events. At the

Battle of Haçova the cooks joined the fight and played a significant role in turning near defeat into victory. At another event narrated by the historian Naima, rebellious Janissaries refused to accept partial payment and began stoning the council members. The cooks attacked the rebels with choppers, ladles, and sticks of firewood. They drove the rebels out of the Divan Square with the help of the Enderun Aghas and the halberdiers.

## The Ramadan Dinners in Topkapı

The Ramadan fast breaking dinners (*iftar*) in the palace were famous. It was a custom for the sultan, the viziers, and other high-ranking people to give these dinners. Rich and poor, many people broke their fast together here. These dinners were also considered a symbol of authority. Foreign envoys and Jewish and Christian spiritual leaders were also invited. In their memoirs, several European travelers enthusiastically relate these glorious feasts and the spiritual atmosphere they experienced.

# The Royal Stable: Has Ahur

The Royal Stable extends between Beşir Ağa Mosque and the Dormitory of the Halberdiers. Differing from other parts of the palace, the stable is a simple and plain structure. It has four divisions. The stable treasury was the first one. The treasury consisted of valuable riding equipment and decorative articles such as saddles, whips, stirrups, bridles, and headgear for horses. These items were decorated with precious gems, gold, and silver.

In the Royal Stable, nearly two hundred horses were kept for the sultan, princes, and other members of the dynasty. These strong and impressive animals were suited to the royal family. They were trained regularly by the stable staff to race and jump barriers.

*The imperial carriages exhibited in the Royal Stable during the early years when the palace was converted to a museum.*

The manager of the Royal Stable was titled the *mirahur* (also *imrahur* or *emir-i ahur*). It was an important position with the potential to become a high official; some stable managers even became grand viziers. The saddle and harness makers (*saraç*) worked at the stables and accompanied the army on military campaigns. There were also veterinarians and blacksmiths among the stable staff.

The Royal Stable gained more importance in the reigns of sultans like

Murad IV, who was greatly fond of horses. The famous seventeenth-century Ottoman poet Nef'i praises some particular horses of the sultan in a poem. The favorite horse of Murad IV was Alacaağası. Upon the death of the sultan, his horses walked in front of the funeral bier with their saddles reversed in an ancient Turkish tradition.

## Beþir Aða Mosque

Beşir Ağa Mosque is located in the left-hand corner when entering from the Gate of Salutations. It was built in the name of Beşir Ağa, who served as the chief eunuch (1717-1746) during the times of Ahmed III and Mahmud I. He had a Turkish bath built adjacent to the mosque, which was also known as the Halberdiers' bath. This building only survived until 1920s. The mosque and the bath were meant for the outer service units of the palace; the stables' staff and the Halberdiers were the people who used these places most.

The mosque became neglected during the period when the palace was not used by the royal family and it was restored in 1939. The historian Abdurrahman Şeref reports that the boards of calligraphy with the names of the Prophet and the Four Caliphs were written by Sultan Abdulmecid himself. The minaret is very different from the traditional ones in Turkish-Islamic art; it was built as a small turret.

# The Ottoman Military Band

The traditional army band was called a *mehter*. This custom dates back to the Khanates to the north of the Black Sea. The band motivated the soldiers with the marches it played at military campaigns, even during battle. It would also play at enthronement ceremonies, upon the news of a victory, on the eve of festival days, and at royal weddings. After playing military marches, the band would pray for the state and the sultan.

*Miniatur of the Mehter band in their official Ottoman costumes.*
*The Mehter band was the oldest military marching band in the world.*

The building for the band members was called the Mehterhane, and it was located before the stables. The band was abolished by Mahmud II after he abolished the Janissaries. In the Second Constitutional Period, the military band was revived again. Some of the old marches were revived and some of them were recomposed. Current military bands can still be seen on parade in their traditional costumes at public spectacles on special occasions.

*A halberdier (detail).*
*Louis-François Cassas, 1784.*

***A Mehter March***

*Seeking refuge with God, we offer our infinite thanks to Him,*
*There is no deity but God, the Sovereign, the Truth, the Evident!*
*Muhammad is His Messenger, man of his word, the trustworthy one.*
*We have surely granted you a manifest victory...*
*And that God may help you to a glourious, mighty achievement...*
*(Fath, 48:1)*
*O sultan, the caliph of God, may peace and God's help be upon you.*
*You are the most steadfast in the divine religion and path of God.*
*May your way be open, and your future celebrated,*
*May God render your sword sharp, may your glory be lasting!*
*So that the blessed sould of the Pride of Humanity will be at ease.*

# The Halberdiers with Sidelocks

The halberdiers with sidelocks (*zülüflü baltacılar*) were the royal guards and servants in the palace. Their dormitory is between the Royal Stables and the Harem. The epigraph reveals that the building was restored on the orders of Murad III in 1587. The stairs after the entrance descend to the Halberdiers' Courtyard. This area resembles a little side street. There are the bedrooms on one side and common service rooms such as the bath and the mosque. The picture of a birdcage on a wall in one of the rooms upstairs symbolizes official guarding, which was the duty of the halberdiers. The walls are covered with tiles, and the wooden parts are decorated with fine penwork.

The bedroom section is a two-storey structure. The novices stayed downstairs, and the seniors stayed upstairs. The dormitory has existed since the fifteenth century. During the reign of Murad III, this building was extended and brought into approximately its present form by the architect Davud Ağa in 1587. The prayer niche of the mosque is covered with colorful İznik tiles.

The halberdiers were the special guards of the sultan. They were chosen from among boys levied from throughout the Empire, and, in the later periods, from boys brought from the mountain villages around Kastamonu. There were about 120–200 of them. They were commanded by the chief gatekeeper, and, after the eighteenth century, by the arms bearer. The highest ranking halberdier was the chief steward of halberdiers (baltacılar kethüdası), the head halberdier (baş baltacı) ranked next, then the keeper of the Council Hall (divanhaneci), and head keeper of the larder (kilercibaşı). Their dark blue uniforms had high collars so as to block their view from the sides. This was meant to prevent them looking around when they served in the Harem. On

each side of their head dangled a lock; this is why they were called “with sidelocks” (*zülüflü*). Halberdiers were responsible for several tasks such as carrying firewood to the Harem, carrying the throne to the front of the Gate of Felicity, safe-keeping of the Council Hall, and so forth. At military campaigns, they would recite the Qur’an under the standard so as to be granted victory by God. Baltacı Mehmed Pasha of the Prut war and Deli Hüseyin Pasha, the commander of the siege of Crete, were once halberdiers.

*The Halberdiers’ Dormitory is one of the most beautiful places in the palace. The walls covered with tiles and the wooden parts decorated with fine penwork are well worth seeing.*

# ENDERUN
# THE INNER PALACE

*Picture of the Gate of Felicity taken during the early years when the palace was converted to a museum. The paintings on the panels on both sides of the gate has not reached today.*

# The Gate of Felicity: Babüssaade

This majestic gate marked the beginning of the private residence of the sultan. It is one of the oldest structures of the palace and was built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. The four pillars which previously stood right in front of the gate have been removed, and the gate took a new form. Above the arch of the gate there is an epigraph from repair work in 1774. Above the epigraph, we see a *basmala*[2] which was scribed by Sultan Mahmud II himself. The monogram of Mahmud II made by the calligrapher Rakım Effendi can be found on the keystone (placed at the highest point) of the arch. The monogram-shaped works of calligraphy on both sides are poems in praise of Abdülhamid I.

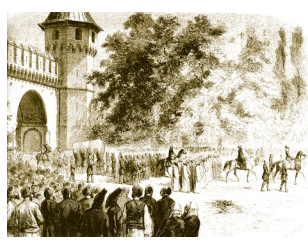
We also see glorious penwork decorations on the Gate of Felicity. Like the two previous gates, the Gate of Felicity consists of two consecutive gates. Along the wall between these two gates, there are doors to the dormitories. To the right of the gate, there is the room of the chief gatekeeper of the Gate of Felicity, and there is the Dormitory of the White Eunuchs (ak ağalar) to the left. On the second door facing the Audience Hall there is a saying of the Prophet meaning, “The source of wisdom is fear of God,” written in calligraphy by Ahmed III. Also, there are round tablets featuring the names of the Ottoman sultans and the dates of their enthronement at both sides of the gate.

The Gate of Felicity was kept open all through the day. However, it could not be passed through casually since it represented both the sultanate and caliphate as the entrance to the sultan’s residence. The gate was the best guarded one in the palace. Except for the passages to the Audience Hall, even the grand vizier could not proceed further without asking permission, as the

Enderun Courtyard was considered the home of the sultan. After this gate, the Enderun section begins. When the servants of the palace entered the Enderun Courtyard, they would use the Carriage Gate or the Aviary Gate. The guards of the Gate of Felicity were white guards from Caucasia; important commanders like Gazanfer Ağa, Hadım Ali Pasha, and Hadım Sinan Pasha came from among them.

## Ceremonies in Front of the Gate of Felicity

There are certain unchanging components in the traditions of the Ottoman palace and dynasty. Even in periods when the administrative center was moved to the Yıldız or Dolmabahçe palaces, some essential ceremonies still took place in Topkapı Palace. The most important ceremonies in the palace were held before the Gate of Felicity: enthronements, funerals of sultans, the exchange of good wishes on Eid days, the ceremony of the sacred standard, and so forth. During an emergency, a rapid gathering of a "standing council" would be held here.

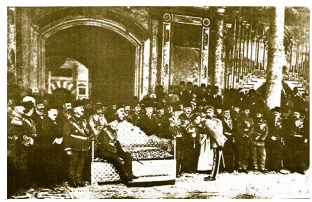


*Funeral procession of Sultan Abdülmecid by Henri Pierre Blanchard Montani, L'Illustration, 1861. The public accompanies the deceased sultan to the grave while his coffin was carried through the Gate of Salutation in the Topkapı Palace.*

### Enthronement

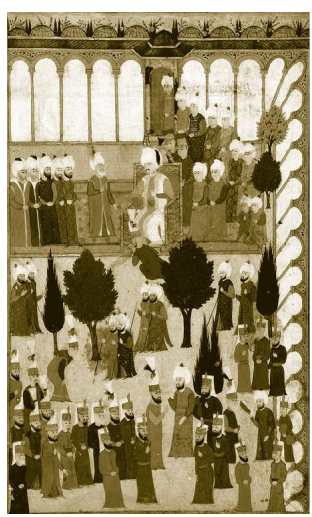
This was the most important and magnificent ceremony. Until the mid-eighteenth century, the first step in the enthronement ceremony took place in the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. The heir would be escorted by the chief eunuch of the Harem and the arms bearer. Firstly, the grand vizier and the sheikhulislam would take the oath of allegiance. Afterwards, the heir would put on the turban of the Prophet Joseph, which was one of the Sacred Trusts brought from Egypt by Selim I. Then, the rest of the statesmen would take the oath of allegiance, one by one. The sheikhulislam would then pray for the new sultan's success. The new sultan would put on a special sable coat and perform two units of prayer. After that, he would come out before the Gate of

Felicity. Good wishes and invocations would be accompanied by applause throughout the ceremony. The new sultan would also be warned by chants of "Don't be proud, my sultan. God is greater than you!" In addition to the applause, the military band would play.



*The photograph of Sultan Vahdeddin's accession to the throne in front of the Gate of Felicity on 4 July 1918*

After the enthronement ceremony, the new sultan would join the funeral prayer of the deceased sultan—who was either his father, uncle, or brother—and return to the Enderun. Carrying out the enthronement and the funeral within the same day had a two-fold benefit. Firstly, the new sultan would remember death and keep in mind that he would be called to account before God; secondly, no administrative gap was left in the monarchical system. Finally, enthronement bonuses would be distributed to the soldiers.



*The miniature of the enthronement of Süleyman the Magnificent in front of the Gate of Felicity. Hünername, vol. II.*

**Eid ceremonies**

The preparations for an Eid ceremony always began on the eve of the Eid. Invitations to attend the ceremony were sent to officials. After the noon prayer

on the eve, the throne would be placed in front of the Gate of Felicity. Everything followed a certain order, from the position of those attending, to the clothes they would wear. The palace servants were positioned on both sides of the throne, and the Enderun aghas would line up behind the throne. The steeds from the royal stables were adorned in all their finery and led to the courtyard. After completing the afternoon prayer, the sultan would come and sit on the throne. Applause would begin with the arrival of the sultan.

Toward the end of the night, the guests would start coming to the palace. The road they walked between the Gate of Salutations and the Council Hall was illuminated by eighty torches. The grand vizier would be informed of the sheikhulislam's arrival and he would meet this honored guest. The dawn prayer would be carried out in congregation. The sultan would complete the dawn prayer with a smaller congregation in the Apartments of the Holy Mantle, and the congregation would pray for the ancestors of the dynasty. Afterwards, they would go to one of the mosques of Ayasofya, Fatih, Süleymaniye, or Sultanahmet for the Eid prayer.

On returning to the palace, the ceremony would begin. The officials would keep calling out good wishes for the sultan and applauding. The statesmen lined up before the sultan, according to rank. The sultan remained standing until he shook hands with Istanbul's *kadı*.

*Eid reception of Selim III by Konstantin Kapıdağlı, 1789, Topkapı Palace Museum.*

Foreign envoys who witnessed the discipline and order in these ceremonies relate them with admiration. At one of these ceremonies, it started raining heavily, and some of the attendants had to stand in the open air. A certain official on duty was standing right under the gutter through which the rainwater was pouring from the roof. To the envoy's surprise, the man stood completely motionless, in spite of being soaked to the skin.

**The Ceremony of the Honored Standard**

The Honored Standard of the Prophet was normally kept in the Apartments of the Holy Mantle, and it was placed in its socket in front of the Gate of Felicity at the outset of military campaigns and at important ceremonies. If the sultan himself did not lead the army on a military campaign, he would entrust the standard to the commander. On the day of the ceremony, the chapter of Fath (Victory) from the Qur'an would be recited while the sultan was in the Royal Apartments. The same chapter was constantly recited during the conquest of Constantinople on the orders of Mehmed II.

*The Honored Standard remade by the Ottomans with pieces from the Prophet's original flag sewn on. Topkapı Palace.*

The sultan would take out the Honored Standard with his own hands and carry it on his shoulder. It was placed in its socket in front of the Gate of Felicity among echoes of "Allahu akbar" (God is great). The standard was a symbol of love for the Prophet and reverence for the caliphate. The chapters of Yasin and Fath (Victory) would be recited. No one, including the sultan, sat during the ceremony. The sultan would kiss the standard, declare the grand vizier the commander of the army while handing it to him, and then pray for him. The grand vizier in turn would kiss the standard, place it on his shoulder and set forth. Then the sheikhulislam and the sheikh efendi would pray for the soldiers. When the ceremony was over, commander of the cavalry and the arms bearer would take the standard. On returning from the campaign, the ceremony would happen in the reverse and the grand vizier would hand the standard to the sultan, who in turn would take it to the Apartments of the Holy Mantle.

The Honored Standard was taken out for the last time during the reign of Mahmud II. The Janissary institution had become a center of rebellion that everybody resented. The sultan, as the caliph of the Muslims, invited the people to gather under the Honored Standard and join the fight against the Janissaries. Civilians responded to the call, and the Janissaries were defeated.

*The silver case where the original flag of the Prophet is kept.*

**The Standing Council**

The emergency meetings attended by the sultan in extraordinary situations like warfare, a revolt, or disorder were known as "standing councils" (*ayak divanı*). The name comes from the fact that all those attending, except for the sultan, remained on their feet. The standing councils in front of the Gate of Felicity were usually held for the sultan's direct consultation with the military branches. The sultan would learn at first hand the soldiers' opinions. The throne would be placed in front of the gate, and the sultan would listen to complaints and discussions. A standing council in wartime was usually held on the battleground. These councils helped to find swift solutions for urgent issues.

During the decline of the state, rebels began to ask for standing councils. At one of these, the grand vizier Hafız Ahmed Pasha was torn to pieces before young Sultan Murad IV. This grievous event, which took place before the Gate of Felicity, affected him deeply. As Murad IV gained control of the reins of power, he took very harsh measures to re-establish law and order. He once made a famous speech threatening the scholars and soldiers he had assembled. That also took place before the Gate of Felicity, the entrance to the Enderun.

**Life in the Enderun**

The students in the Enderun would address one another with the Turkish plural form of "you" as a sign of respect. These young people could not act

impertinently even to each other. They had to be perfectly respectful toward their superiors. They followed strict discipline in their hours of eating, sleeping, rising, and so on. They were under constant supervision day and night. Enderun discipline was reflected in palace protocol, and, contrary to popular misconception, the Harem was the female counterpart of the Enderun.

The aghas woke with the call to dawn prayer. The prayer was completed in congregation in the Ağalar Mosque and then the daily routine began. Heedless behavior at table was met by a verbal admonition or a rap on the hand with a ladle. If the boys used impudent forms of address, did not behave themselves, or violated discipline, such as the clothing regulations, they would be severely punished. The disciplined education was aimed at improving the students' skills; they were taught both how to use their minds and to be persevering. In addition to the students, the princes who were not sent to administrative units outside the palace were also educated here.

*Ottoman officers (silahdar ağa, peyk, solak) in their special costumes. Painting by Jean Brindesi.*

The residents of the Enderun led a demanding life. It was an academy of the palace, but not in the sense we understand today. The boys who came here were educated in Turkish-Islamic culture by master teachers. They learned literature, Arabic, Persian, Qur'anic studies, calligraphy, and sports on the one hand, and at the same time they actively served and learned the life and practical rules of the palace. Albertus Bobovius, or Santuri Ali Ufki Bey, was educated at the Enderun and became a good composer. Later on, he wrote a book about his Enderun years. Students there were trained in all aspects of life and culture. Even some great religious scholars were raised here. When the

residents of the Enderun, who worked in the palace service while learning manners, science and arts, proved capable, they were promoted by order of the sultan himself.

## The Lesser and Greater Chambers of Enderun

Right after entering from the Gate of Felicity, the rooms of the Lesser Chamber are on the left, and those of the Greater Chamber are on the right. The Lesser and Greater Chambers were the two initial stages of the Enderun. These units were where the Enderun placed the boys most promising in terms of intelligence and physical abilities who had been taken into the palace before they reached twelve years of age. Different from the schools we know, the students kept serving and learning, and there were no classes. They were promoted from one dormitory to the next. As the sultan appreciated the service of anyone "student" they would be promoted.

The students of these first two chambers received a minimal scholarship and two uniforms annually. These beginners were called the "wrapped-skirts" (dolamalılar), since they tucked the ends of their skirts into their belts. They only gained the right to wear a caftan after serving a trial period, acquiring the positive opinion of their room-master, and finally with the affirmation of the sultan. After being authorized to wear a caftan, they would consecutively be promoted to the Campaign Dormitory, the Dormitory for the Larder Staff, that of the Treasury, and finally to the Royal Apartments as the highest ranking residents of the Enderun.

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2 "In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate," in Arabic. Muslims should begin doing all actions by reciting the *basmala*. (Tr.)

# The Audience Hall

Having been built right opposite the Gate of Felicity, the Audience Hall blocks the view of the Enderun Courtyard. Anyone who looks from the Gate of Felicity can only see the Audience Hall, not the inner courtyard. The Audience Hall was the place where the grand vizier was received by the sultan to report the issues discussed in the Imperial Council. The sultan would exchange views with the grand vizier when making decisions. He also accepted high-ranking statesmen, foreign envoys, and scholars. It is a rather modest place in comparison with the chambers where European or Russian sovereigns accepted foreign envoys.

*The photograph of the Audience Hall viwed from the Enderun Courtyard by the Abdullah Brothers*

*Interior view of the Audience Hall*

The decorated column heads and the arches are typical components of Ottoman architecture. In order to appreciate the architectural beauty of the structure, one needs to walk around it instead of passing by. The fountain near the chamber at the side of the entrance is from the era of Süleyman the Magnificent. There is one more fountain inside the chamber. The canopied throne, the fireplace, and the decorated dome reflect the absolute authority of the sultan.

## Receptions at the Audience Hall

As the sultans, beginning with Mehmed the Conqueror, ceased to preside over the council, a separate place for giving an account of the council sessions to the sultan was needed. The sultans used the Audience Hall for nearly four centuries. The council members presented their reports on certain days of the week. The faucets inside and outside the chamber would be turned on so that the sound of the running water prevented the talks being overheard.

The grand vizier would send a brief of the issues he would present beforehand. When the sultan called, the council members would come and enter as protocol required. They would not sit but stand in a line facing the door. Firstly, the chief of Janissaries would give his report about the army, then the military judges would come and read the briefs about appointments of judges. Afterwards, the viziers and the provincial treasury chiefs would be received with ceremony. Each treasury chief would read his financial reports and the grand vizier would present administrative matters. If there were any confidential issues, the others would leave and the grand vizier and the sultan

would discuss these in private.

As mentioned earlier, envoys would be taken to the guest room at the Gate of Felicity. They would sometimes wait for months. The sultan would admit foreign envoys particularly on the days when the Janissaries filled the Divan Square to receive their three-monthly salaries. The noise echoed all around, and the Ottomans took this as an opportunity for a display of military power. The envoys were presented according to imperial protocol. The relevant officials would take the envoy to the Council Hall. Normally, three tables were laid; this was raised to five when envoys came. The envoy would eat at the same table with the grand vizier. If the envoy was to be accepted by the sultan, he would be taken to the imperial presence with armed officials on both sides. They would greet the sultan at three spots. The sultan would listen to the envoy's letter from a translator from Fener. Those in the imperial presence were not allowed to make eye contact with the sultan. They were to look down and wait. The sultan followed the protocol as well. Council members and foreign envoys were not the only people admitted to the Audience Hall; visiting kings and princes were also received here.

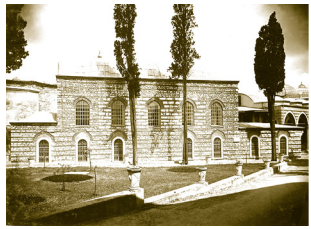
## Aðalar Mosque

The building presently used as the museum library is the Ağalar Mosque. The title agha (*ağa*) was not only used for the black and white eunuchs of the Harem, but also for the students of the Enderun. This mosque was built on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror and is the biggest and oldest in the palace. The sultan and the princes, together with the Enderun residents, usually performed their five daily prayers here, except for the night prayer (*isha*). In relation to the other structures in the courtyard, the mosque is on the diagonal position since it was built to face toward the *qibla*.[3]

The building has a rectangular plan. The section used as the reading room was added later on. The roof of the original building consisted of a wooden base covered with tiles. After the mid-eighteenth century, it was covered with a barrel vault. The beautiful tiles inside the mosque belong to the seventeenth century. The three windows at the back open to the Harem mosque where the queen mother and the wives of the sultan would follow the imam in Ağalar Mosque.

Today, the building is used as a library for manuscripts. The library has a rich collection in different languages. Particularly Mehmed the Conqueror and

Süleyman the Magnificent, the two book-loving sultans who can be compared to Renaissance lords, bought all the good books they could find, no matter what language they were in.



*Ağalar mosque was built on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror and is the biggest and oldest of the places of worship in the palace. The sultan and the princes, together with the Enderun residents, usually performed their five daily prayers here, except for the night prayer.*

*The Library of Ahmed III is one of the masterpieces of the Tulip Period. As a calligrapher and a lover of books, Ahmed III had a library built, which replaced a pool. The structure was also known as the Enderun Library.*

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3 The direction of the Holy Ka‘ba in Mecca, the direction in which Muslims pray.

# The Library of Ahmed III

The library is an elegant structure in the middle of the Enderun Courtyard, right behind the Audience Hall. It is one of the masterpieces of the Tulip Period. Previously there was a pool here built by the great architect Sinan on the orders of Selim II. As a calligrapher and a lover of reading, Ahmed III had a library built, which replaced the pool. The sultan let the aghas in the Enderun benefit from the books in his possession by having this library built. The structure was also known as the Enderun Library.

This library is an indication of the palace residents' thirst for knowledge. The palace contained two schools, the Enderun and the Harem; an atmosphere where learning was encouraged pervaded. Thanks to this library, the invaluable manuscripts in the treasuries and the Harem were brought together and preserved. This is also mentioned in the epigraph of the library.

No books were allowed to be taken outside the palace. A record from 1719 reveals that Ahmed III donated his personal collection of books to the library and wished them to bear his own seal, so that the users included him in their prayers. Different books were donated to the library at the times of Abdülhamid I and Selim III.

The building was designed for the good of both the books and their readers. The library was built above the ground to protect the books from humidity. A total of thirty-two windows in two rows let in the daylight for easier reading. The stairs of the library also served for waking up the people in the Enderun apartments for the dawn prayer. The muezzin on duty would climb the stairs and make the call to prayer toward the dormitories. Then all the residents of the Enderun would go to the Ağalar Mosque for the dawn prayer.

There are no books in the library today. The manuscripts were transferred to the museum library in 1966. The pieces of calligraphy seen in old photographs are kept in the stores of the museum. The library's records, book inventory, and the pickaxe used to lay the foundation of the building are still preserved. The same pickaxe was used at the foundation of Ahmed III Mosque.

Ahmed III was the son of Mehmed IV (also known as Mehmed the Hunter), and his wife Gülnuş Emetullah Sultan. Unusually for that time, the sultan before Ahmed III was his brother; they were both sons of Mustafa II. The long rule of Ahmed III, the Tulip Period, is both criticized as a period of lavishness when corruption increased, and praised as a period of opening to the West and appreciation of art. During Ahmed III's reign, engineering institutions were founded. Turkish architecture of the Tulip Period reflects an inclination toward the West. On the other hand, studies of the East and Persian literature were not neglected. Along with the architectural style called Ottoman Baroque, there were serious improvements in calligraphy and gardening.

In addition to the library, there are two monumental fountains built in the name of Ahmed III and the works of calligraphy on them were executed by the sultan himself.

# The Fatih Pavilion: Enderun Treasury

The Fatih Pavilion overlooks the sea and its view extends from Üsküdar to the Princes' Islands. The structure was skillfully built on sloping ground, and it has stood for more than five centuries. It was completed between 1462 and 1463. The Fatih Pavilion consists of four halls. A marble fountain can be seen in the roofed area in one of the corners. There are two mantelpieces in two of the halls.

The treasury was replete at the time of Selim I, after the Çaldıran Battle and the Egyptian Campaign. There was not sufficient room in the treasury to take in all the spoils of war, and some part of the treasury was transferred to the Yedikule cellars. Having filled up the treasury with gold, Selim I ordered, "Whichever of my successors manages to fill the treasury—which I have filled with gold—with *mangır* (copper Ottoman coins), let him put his own seal on it. Otherwise, let my seal be kept." The seal of Selim I remained on the Enderun Treasury until the palace became a museum. This seal, made of red carnelian, was in the keeping of the officer of the treasury. The seal displayed the name of the sultan in the middle, encircled by the expression "I trust only in God."

The Enderun Treasury was at the sultan's disposal. The gold and silver in the treasury was used for the palace expenses, public works, and charity. At times of need, such as wartime, the sultan would lend money from the Enderun Treasury to the state treasury, never to reclaim it.

A certain section of the Enderun Treasury was allocated for the valuables of the sultans. These consisted of spoils of war, gifts presented by foreign envoys, or objects bought by the sultan. Gold and silver pots, silken carpets and prayer rugs, crests, armbands, belts, and caftans decorated with gems,

jewelry consisting of diamonds, pearls, ruby, and emerald were all held there. In addition, there were the Sacred Trusts, such as the turban of the Prophet Joseph brought from Egypt, the cap and turban of Imam Abu Hanifa, and the garments of some other holy figures.

*The Terrace of Fatih Pavilion*

*Fatih Pavilion is presently used for exhibiting the treasury collection.*

The chamber was renovated from time to time, for it contained priceless objects. Another room was added to this section at the time of Mahmud I, which was called the envoys' room, since the Ottoman envoys stored the valuable goods they would take away here. Exhibition of the treasury at enthronements was a tradition. In later periods, some windows and porticos were enclosed out of concern for the safety of the items here, so the original architecture of the structure was distorted. During World War I, Sultan Reşad

sent the treasury contents to Konya for safekeeping. At the renovations in the Republican era, the pavilion was restored to its original form.

By the pavilion there used to be the Larder and a Turkish bath. Today, the larder building is used by the museum administration, and it is very different from the original structure built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. The Campaign Chamber was built where the Turkish bath had once been. Mehmed the Conqueror loved the comfortable alcove of the Treasury Chamber, for it was the only place he could have some rest when he was preoccupied with state affairs.

## Campaign Dormitory: Seferli Koðuþu

The epigraph on the gate bears the monogram of Sultan Mehmed Reşad, who had the dormitory repaired. The building used to serve previously as a bath. It collapsed in an earthquake in 1509. Damp in the fabric of the building must have played an important role in the collapse as well. The building was allocated to the Enderun students from the seventeenth century on. The name "Campaign" appeared after Murad IV took some of the aghas of this dormitory on a military campaign. After the Greater and Lesser Chambers, a student would be promoted to the Campaign Chamber. The "wrapped-skirts" began to wear caftans here and ascended to the first rank of the distinguished class of caftan wearers.

In its early years, the inhabitants of the Campaign Chamber were responsible for washing the laundry of the Enderun residents, cleaning and keeping things tidy. Later on, they began to learn skills like playing the violin, wrestling, cutting hair, and so on.

*Costumes of Sultan Bayezid II exhibited in the Fatih Pavilion*

In addition, the washing and ironing of the sultan's clothes were also among the responsibilities of the Campaign students. Whenever the sultan prayed at the mosque, the chief of the Campaigners would lay his prayer rug.

*The Enderun aghas*

In addition, the palace dwarfs and mutes were also educated at this dormitory. The dwarfs' duty was to entertain the sultan, but they should not be confused with jesters. They were also responsible for the sultan's books, and they occasionally read for the sultan as well.

The mute attendants would serve while confidential state matters were being negotiated. Sometimes they would carry out the punishment of those who had committed grave offences, such as rebellion against the state.

## Larder Staff Dormitory: Kilerli Koðuþu

The structures adjacent to the treasury are the Larder Staff Dormitory and

the Treasurer's Dormitory, which were built on the orders of Mehmed the Conqueror. The larder staff carried out different duties along with their training. The residents of this dormitory were responsible for the larder, and they were in the private service of the sultan. Being a member of the larder staff dormitory was a respectable position, since it meant being near to the sultan. Their most important duty was preparing the sultan's meal. Cooking, laying the table, serving at table, clearing the table, doing the dishes, and the like were all their duty. They prepared sherbet drinks, syrups, and pastes (*macun*). They preserved and provided food for the Harem as well. Providing the candles for the rooms and mosques of the palace and lighting them were among their duties, including that of the great candleholder in the Apartments of the Holy Mantle.

They would prepare medicine when necessary. Next to the dormitory, there was the Head Physician's Room, which was also known as the Pharmacy. While carrying out their duty, the larder staff were to have ritual ablution. The head of the larder coordinated the division of labor among a few hundred men, including the non-Enderun kitchen staff of the Birun.

The residents of the dormitory would collect an amount of April rainwater, which was seen as a symbol of abundance, and then offer it to the sultan who would reward them with a gratuity. The young pages in the dormitory were given a high degree of education. They regularly received additional payments under different designations along with their three-monthly salaries.

*Ottoman soldiers stending guard in front of the Treasury Office*

The structure of the dormitory was mostly wooden. Downstairs there were the bedrooms of the pages, and upstairs there were the utensils, food, sherbet drinks, and syrups. Candles specially made for the palace were also kept here. A fire in 1856 devastated the dormitory, and it was rebuilt. Today the building is used for museum administration. Under the building there is a door opening to the fourth courtyard through the Kemeraltı Passageway.

## The Treasurer's Dormitory

All that remains of this building today is the paving made of black and white stones. The residents of this dormitory were responsible for the Enderun Treasury and some other valuable items kept at the palace. The person in charge of this unit was the chief treasurer, one of the eminent officials at the palace. There were certain craftspeople under his command. Each of them was an expert at a certain sort of item, such as jewelry, swords, furs, and so on. The number of these experts or masters amounted to a few thousand at certain periods.

A resident of the Treasurer's Dormitory or the Larder Staff Dormitory would start his service outside the palace as a governor of one of the chief administrative units.

## Treasury of the Arms Bearer

This building is located beside the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. Not only weapons, but various items kept in this treasury were under the responsibility of the arms bearer: swords, shields, armor and some other equipment in the possession of the sultan, gold candlesticks of the Privy Chamber and some of the pavilions, some money for the sultan's personal use, the remainder of the Sacred Trusts kept with the Holy Mantle, covers from the sacred cities, some old and valuable manuscripts of the Qur'an and other books. Being arms bearer was an important title, for it meant proximity to the sultan. Some of the pashas of renown, such as Ali Pasha of Çorlu and the commander of Crete, Yusuf Pasha, had once served as arms bearers.

# The Royal Apartments
# (Apartments of the Holy Mantle)

The Royal Apartments in the Enderun Courtyard were named after the Throne Room (Has Oda). They were first built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror and underwent serious renovation work at the time of Ahmed III before taking their present form. At the times of Mehmed the Conqueror and Bayezıd II, they were used as the sultan's working room. When the Sacred Trusts were brought here at the time of Selim I, the building gained a special meaning and began to be called the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. The proclamation of God's unity above the entrance gate was scribed by Ahmed III. There are three rooms and one hall on both floors of the building.

## The Servants of the Royal Apartments: Has Odalılar

The Throne Room group was the highest class among the residents of the Enderun. They were forty young men in the close service of the sultan. In the beginning there were thirty of them; the number was increased to forty at the time of Selim I. The highest ranking servants—all of whom were named after their duty—were the chief of the Throne Room, the arms bearer, the master of clothes, the master of shoes, the master of turbans, and the master of keys. The Throne Room group had the privilege to grow their hair and have long sideburns. Owing to their sideburns, they were known as "the aghas with sidelocks" (zülüflü ağalar). They had various responsibilities in the sultan's service, and they occasionally became his confidante. They accompanied the sultan while he was engaged in calligraphy, poetry, reading, selecting his clothes, eating, strolling in the gardens, giving audiences, supervising the council sessions, and so forth. When the sultan retired to sleep, two of the

Throne Room servants would keep guard beside him. The hierarchy and duties in the Harem among the eunuchs and the Harem women were in parallel.

*Servants of the Royal Apartments*

*The photograph of the Royal Apartments where the Sacred Relics are kept.*

The chief of the Throne Room (*has oda başı*) spent nearly all his time near the sultan. He would keep track of the daily affairs of the sultan, and help him with personal issues. The arms bearer, who ranked next, was the aide-de-camp and the master of ceremonies. He would bear the bow, quiver, and the sword of the sultan. This is why they are depicted in some old engravings and miniatures as following the sultan with a sword in their hands.

*The Holy Mantle of the Prophet was brought to Istanbul by Sultan Selim I*

*and was later placed by Sultan Abdülaziz in a large golden chest on a high four-legged table in the Throne Room of the Topkapı Palace.*

The privileged Throne Room group had the honor of taking care of the Sacred Trusts; in turns, they recited the Qur'an day and night without pause out of respect for the owner of the Holy Mantle. They also prayed for the good of the state and the good of the sultan in both worlds. They regularly cleaned the Apartment of the Holy Mantle and wiped it with rosewater. Out of respect, even the dust collected after the cleaning was never stepped on. They burned incense and sprinkled rosewater around on blessed nights.

In the month of Ramadan, they carried out extra duties. Those with a beautiful voice gave the call to prayer. They would also recite invocations in the intervals of the Tarawih prayer. Sometimes the sultan would join them at religious services.

## The Fountain Hall

The first section of the Royal Apartments after the entrance is the Fountain Hall. It is named after the fountain under the first dome. There was a seat for the sultan under the other dome. The window shutters and the wooden doors opening to the Audience Room and the rooms have remained from the period when the structure was first built, and there is the name of Mehmed the Conqueror on them. The door of the Throne Room, decorated with mother of pearl, was installed during renovation in 1916. From time to time, the people of Enderun performed their prayers in the Fountain Hall.

*The Fountain Hall and the Throne Room, Süleymanname, 16th century. Topkapı Palace Museum.*

## Audience Room

The entrance to the Audience Room is to the right of the Fountain Hall, and the Qur'anic verse inscribed on the door can be translated as follows:

(*Enter you here in peace, perfectly secure!* (Hijr 15:46...

Here the sultan would read daily briefs and give relevant orders. He also granted audience to the people he admitted to his presence. For more formal events, such as receiving foreign envoys, he would use the Audience Hall facing the Gate of Felicity. The room is decorated with İznik and Kütahya tiles along with Tekfur Sarayı workshop tiles. With tile samples of different periods, the room resembles a beautiful tile exhibition. There is a band of calligraphy with verses from the Qur'an (Ahzab 33:38–44). The remaining verses are inscribed in the middle of the dome of the Throne Room. The grand vizier and the prominent men of the palace would come here to congratulate the sultan on enthronement days and for the ceremony of visiting the Holy Mantle on the fifteenth day of the month of Ramadan. This section is open to visitors today. Some of the Sacred Trusts, particularly the footprint and a strand from the beard of the Prophet, can be seen here.

## The Throne Room/Privy Chamber: Has Oda

The Throne Room is the focal point of in the building. It is the second room on the right. Above the door "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God" is written in Arabic in *celi sülüs* style calligraphy. The entrance door is the work of the mother of pearl artist Master Vasıf. The lines from Rumi on the door can be translated as follows:

*All the doors are closed but Yours,*
*So that the destitute will not deviate to other paths,*
*O Door of generosity and dignity;*
*O Door of radiating light,*
*The sun, the moon and the stars are Your servants.*

The Throne Room was generally used as the working room of the sultan except for in summer. Particularly, Mehmed the Conqueror, Bayezıd II, Selim I, and Süleyman the Magnificent spent most of their daily lives here. Due to

the intensity of state affairs, they would sometimes sleep on the large cushions in the room instead of retiring to the Harem. The weakened dome was elevated in repair work carried out after the Egyptian campaign of Selim I. The dome, higher than others in the palace, reflects the room's importance.

In the opposite left corner, we see a canopied throne made of silver and gilded with gold, which was made on the orders of Murad IV. A prince to be crowned as sultan would first sit on this throne prior to the ceremony before the Gate of Felicity. It began to be used for the protection of the Holy Mantle in its gold chest at the time of Mahmud II. The throne was placed in the corner and the remaining two sides were enclosed with a silver grating.

Even though the interior of the Throne Room is not very large, the splendid tile panels and the majestic dome give a sense of spaciousness. Due to the presence of the Prophet's Mantle, the Ode to the Mantle (Qasida al-Burda) in Arabic by Al-Busiri is written on the tile panels. Ever since it was brought here from Egypt by Selim I, the Holy Mantle has been kept in the Throne Room. The Apartments of the Holy Mantle were closed to visits in 1927. They were reopened as a part of the museum in 1962. Most of the Sacred Trusts which were kept in the Throne Room have been placed in the niches and display windows in the Audience Room and the Fountain Hall. Today, the structure is known as the Pavilion of the Sacred Trusts. Visitors are not allowed inside the Throne Room, but when one looks from the Audience Room, the throne and the golden case where the Holy Mantle is kept can be seen.

## Visiting the Holy Mantle

The Holy Mantle was presented by the Prophet to the poet Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. When he visited God's Messenger, he accepted Islam and recited a poem for him. On hearing the poem, God's Messenger was pleased and he presented the mantle he was wearing to Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. This event became famous among Muslims and possessing the Holy Mantle was considered to be symbolic of following the path of God's Messenger and being his caliph. Later on, the Umayyad ruler Muawiya bought the Holy Mantle, and he wore it on religious celebrations. It was passed down from one caliph to another, and the Abbasid caliphs observed the tradition of wearing it on days of religious importance. It was always kept at the center of the caliphate of the time. The Ottoman caliphates also revered this trust.

*The silver grating where the gold chest of the Holy Mantle is kept.*

The halberdiers were responsible for the protection of the Holy Mantle. The master of turbans in the beginning and in later periods the treasurer was responsible for its maintenance. The outer surface of the woolen mantle is black and inner side is beige. In the middle of Ramadan, every sultan, as the caliph of the Muslims, would make the ceremonial visit to the Holy Mantle.

On the fourteenth day of Ramadan, high-ranking officials and scholars were invited to visit the Holy Mantle. At night, preparations for the visit would begin with cleaning by the Throne Room group, joined by the sultan himself. The sultan would clean the grating protecting the Holy Mantle with sponges dipped in rosewater. The other officers would clean the rest of the room. The actual ceremony would begin next day after the noon prayer in Ayasofya. Certain officeholders would recite verses from the Qur'an one after another. The sultan, the grand vizier and the chief eunuch would take their places near the chest. When everybody had taken their places, the sultan would open the chest and permit all those present to make their visit in turns. The visitors would pray to God and touch their faces to the Holy Mantle. Everyone including the sultan would stand throughout the ceremony as a sign of respect. When the visits were over, they would leave the room, beginning with the lowest rank. The last ones to leave were the sheikhulislam, the grand vizier, and the sultan. After the visit, the arms bearer would wash the part where the visitors had touched their faces. He would use rosewater carried in a gold bowl, then perfume the Mantle, and finally dry it. The sultan would swathe the Holy Mantle in new wrappings and put it back in its gold chest.

All the steps of the ceremony were carried out in an air of spiritual enthusiasm; touching their faces to the Holy Mantle of the Prophet was a great honor for those in attendance. The women of the Harem would also make their visit together with the queen mother.

Although this ceremony was held invariably every year, it always raised

great interest among Muslims all around the world. In the modern era there would be extensive press coverage about the visit to the Holy Mantle by the caliph.

*Interior detail of the Pavilion of the Sacred Relics*

## The Handkerchief Room: Destimal Odası

The calligraphy on the left of the Fountain Hall is a prayer meaning, "O opener of doors, open for us the best door," written in *celi sülüs* style. The door here opens to the Handkerchief Room. After some time, the visitors' touching their faces to the centuries-old Holy Mantle began to wear it out, and some holes started to appear in it. Therefore, direct contact with the Holy Mantle was abandoned and muslin handkerchiefs touched on it were presented to visitors instead. The Persian term *destimal* was used for these handkerchiefs. The impressions on the destimals were made in this room. The expression impressed in the middle of each destimal was a call to invoke God's blessings on the Prophet. The stanza, each of whose four lines was imprinted along a different edge can be translated as follows:

*The silken sky cannot even be a carpet rolled out,*
*For the mantle of the prophets' pride.*
*Touch it to our face and kiss it,*
*Petition to the intercessor of all.*

At the time of Selim I, the dormitory of the servants was in the basement of the apartments. The passage to the stone stairway descending to the dormitory was closed later on. Osman II had a new bath and a chamber built,

which is known as the Handkerchief Room today. The epigraphs on the walls give information about these renovations. The room was known as the dining hall in earlier periods as it was used by the servants. At the time of Murad IV, a dome was added, and the walls were covered with tiles.

## The Incense Mortar

The incense burned in order to give a pleasant fragrance to the Apartments of the Holy Mantle was prepared in the marble mortar near the entrance. The ingredients were ground into a powder, rosewater was added, and the substance was shaped in molds so as to be burned in candlesticks or incense holders. The inscription on the mortar is in Persian.

## The Sundial

The sundial in front of the Apartments of the Holy Mantle was installed at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. The epigraph reveals that it was repaired at the time of Mustafa III.

## The Fountain of Def-i Gam Hatun

The fountain behind the sundial was given in charity by Def-i Gam Hatun, the wife of a chief steward. The date on the epigraph is 1226 ah (1810 ce).

*Sundial*

*The fountain of Def-i Gam Hatun*

*The Garden of Pavilions surrounded by high walls and many pavilions built at different times*

# The Fourth Courtyard: The Garden of Pavilions

The fourth courtyard once used to be a garden only. In time different pavilions were built and the garden came to be called the Garden of Pavilions. The fourth courtyard is protected by high walls. The walls surround the Royal Stables, the Harem, the Audience Hall, the Elephant Garden, the Fig Grove (İncirlik), the Box-tree Garden (Şimşirlik), Mecidiye Pavilion, and Sofa Mosque. The walls end at Fatih Pavilion. This area consists of two main sections: the Imperial Terrace (Sofayı Hümayun) and the Tulip Garden.

The Imperial Terrace is the highest spot of the Fourth Courtyard. It yields a wonderful view of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. This area is exposed to the winds from the cape. The Ottomans tried to reduce the effect of the wind by putting glass screens between porticos and hanging curtains around the terrace. Miniatures depict the Imperial Terrace with carpets and straw mats. In summer the sultans preferred to meet here with the statesmen. When Ramadan fell in the summertime, the Huzur Lessons—the lessons in Qur'anic interpretation in the presence of the sultan—were also held here.

## Circumcision Room

This single room is thought to have been built during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, and it took its present form at the time of Sultan İbrahim. It is adjacent to the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. The sultans would complete the sunna prayers here and later join the congregation for the prescribed prayers in Ağalar Mosque or the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. Also, the room was used for the circumcision ceremonies of princes. The weddings of the sultans' daughters were held here too. The room is decorated

with beautiful İznik tiles. The tiles on the side facing the Imperial Terrace are particularly rare and very special examples of their kind. The room has four windows with built-in fountains.

*Princes being carried to the circumcision ceremony through the Third Courtyard. Surname, painting by Levni. Topkapı Palace Museum.*

## The Fountain of the Holy Mantle

There is a marble fountain outside the Circumcision Room. What makes this fountain different from tens of others in the palace is the fact that the bodies of the deceased sultans were washed here. The epigraph bearing the monogram of Mahmud II reveals that the famous green dome over the Prophet's tomb in Medina was built on the orders of Mahmud II. The green dome remains as one of the few surviving Ottoman memorials in the sacred cities.

The first person to be informed about the death of a sultan was the grand vizier, who would in turn give the relevant orders for the ceremonies for the funeral and an enthronement. The body of the deceased sultan would be brought to the funeral stone, with the permission of the new sultan. Before his final ablutions, the clothes of the deceased sultan would be removed by cutting them apart at the sleeves. Preserved in the palace there are several items of clothing which belonged to sultans, such as the fur coat of Mehmed the Conqueror and the bloodied clothes of Sultan Abdülaziz.

*The bodies of the deceased sultans were washed near this fountain outside the Circumcision Room.*

The halberdiers would bring the body of the deceased sultan to a site near the fountain of the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. A tent would be pitched and the clerk of the chief eunuch would wash the body. Praises for the Prophet from the minarets of Ayasofya, Fatih, Süleymaniye, and Sultanahmet mosques would announce the death of the sultan.

The body would be placed on the funeral stone near the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. The sheikhulislam would lead the funeral prayer. When the funeral prayer was over, the body of the late sultan would be carried to his tomb.

## The Revan Pavilion

Located near the pool at the Imperial Terrace, the Revan Pavilion was built in 1636 in commemoration of the victory of Yerevan (1634) on the orders of Murad IV. The lessons in Qur'anic interpretation which were attended by the sultan would be held here. Murad IV used the Revan Pavilion as his throne room in the final years of his reign. It is known that he occasionally received his mother Kösem Sultan and his sisters here. From time to time, his wife Ayşe Sultan also came to the Revan Pavilion.[4] Sultans also used this place for the Royal Wardrobe. The clothes of the sultan would be kept here and the master of turbans would prepare the turbans to be worn by the sultan. This is why it is also known as the Turban Room (Sarık Odası). Both in terms of its plan and decoration, the Revan Pavilion is like a smaller model of the Baghdad Pavilion. The Sacred Trusts were temporarily placed in the Revan Pavilion during general cleanings and the cleaning before the visiting ceremonies in the holy month of Ramadan. The sultan himself helped to carry the Sacred Trusts.

*This pavilion has an octagonal plan and three alcoves. The decorations on the ceiling are particularly splendid examples of Ottoman art. There is a roofed balcony on the side facing the Tulip Garden.*

This pavilion has an octagonal plan and three alcoves. The decorations on the ceiling are particularly splendid examples of Ottoman art. There is a roofed balcony on the side facing the Tulip Garden. Lines from the Ode to the Mantle (Qasida al-Burda) are inscribed on the ceiling of this balcony, and it is known that Ahmed III practiced calligraphy here. Works of calligraphy by this sultan can be seen in different sections of the palace. The windows of the pavilion are full of colorful stained glass panels, doors and cabinet covers are decorated with mother-of-pearl, and the walls are covered with tiles. All of these present the most beautiful samples of seventeenth-century ornamentation and were made after the great Palace Fire in 1665.

At the time of Selim III, consultations with scholars were held in this pavilion. The building served as a library at the time of Mahmud I. The Throne Room group were able to benefit from the large library, which mostly consisted of history books. Unique volumes presented to the sultan were preserved here. With the support of Osman III and then Mustafa III, the library amassed a unique collection of manuscripts. These invaluable works are kept in the museum library today.

*Photograph of the İftariye Bower*

## The İftariye Bower

This elegant and unusual structure is made of cast copper bronze. Although it is called a *köşk* in Turkish (meaning summer pavilion), it is actually a metal-roofed balcony. It was constructed on the orders of Sultan İbrahim. The name İftariye, from the Turkish word *iftar* (fast-breaking meal), comes from the fact that the sultan used to wait for the sunset here before breaking his fast. In summer, it was a pleasant spot, shady during the day and cool at night. The inscription inside the dome is a supplication to God, asking for blessing, felicity, strength, dignity, and glory.

Below the İftariye Bower, there is the Fig Grove, and below that the Elephant Garden. It is thought that elephants were once kept in this area.

## The Stables for Disguise

The sultans would occasionally patrol the city in disguise to make an inspection. The horses kept in the Elephant Garden and their riding equipment were relatively humble in order not to reveal the identity of the sultan. This tradition continued until the nineteenth century. Mehmed the Conqueror, Murad IV, and Mahmud II in particular were famous for using this method. The time of Murad IV was a period of anarchy. The competent sultan maintained law and order in the long run; some of his patrols ended with executions. Osman III also went to public coffee houses in disguise to learn first-hand the rumors that were doing the rounds among the people.

*Photograph of the pavilions in the Fourth Courtyard (circa 1900)*

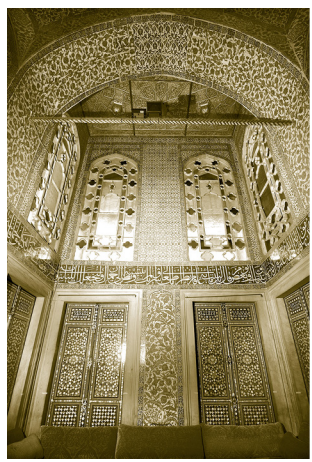
Not all the inspections in disguise were made on land. The sultan and his retinue would use the boat of the *bostancı başı*, who held the records of all the buildings near the coast. Buildings under construction or ships being built

were inspected in this way. Some of the disguise trips were made for purposes of relaxing, visiting the tombs of saintly figures, or praying at Eyüp Mosque in Ramadan. Abdülhamid I is known to have visited the sheikhulislams Dürrizade Mustafa and Arif Effendi in their homes when they were unwell.

## The Baghdad Pavilion

The Baghdad Pavilion was built in memory of the retaking of Baghdad by Murad IV, and in this it is similar to the Revan Pavilion. Its construction began when the sultan left for the campaign. Although the structure had been completed by the time Murad IV returned, the decorations were completed later on. These beautiful ornamentations with minute detail took a whole year to complete, but the sultan did not live long enough to enjoy this place. The historian Naima reports that Sultan Murad's brother İbrahim ascended the throne while the Qur'anic verse *"...And when Ibrahim (Abraham) raised the foundations of the House..."* was being inscribed on the tiles. Between the top windows of the Baghdad Pavilion the Verse of the Throne from the Qur'an (Baqara 2:255) is inscribed.

The dome is decorated with a low plaster relief in *malakari* technique. The plaster is not applied on gazelle skin as has been claimed. There are gilded flower figures on the plaster in red, blue, and brown colors. In terms of architecture, decoration, and its location, it is the most beautiful example of Ottoman pavilions. It provides a very beautiful view of the Bosphorus. It has a wide roof around an elegant dome that measures nine meters in diameter.



*Interior detail of the Baghdad Pavilion*

*The Baghdad Pavilion was occasionally used for certain official meetings. It has reached our day with minor changes.*

## The Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha

Different from the other pavilions in the palace, the Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha is located in the Tulip Garden. There are different stories about whom the pavilion was named after; it is thought to have been built in the name of Kara Mustafa Pasha of Merzifon. Although there is no available record of when the structure was built, we know that Mehmed IV received a Russian envoy here in 1682.

The wooden structure and decorations of the Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha are unique. It faces the Tulip Garden and the Sofa Pavilion, and one side faces the sea. One side is sunny and the other side remains in the shade. It is considered trailblazing in Turkish architecture; it inspired different plans for seaside villas (*yalı*) which were built afterwards. There is a great hall (*divanhane*) to the left of the pavilion, and a sherbet room to the right. These halls are famous for their ceiling decorations. The wooden parts and the ceiling of the sherbet room are also ornamented. There are verbal descriptions of Prophet Muhammad (*hilya*) on its walls.

Sultan Ahmed III was fond of this pavilion. Sometimes he would have his meals here, watch the games of *tomak*, and in the Tulip Period he held dessert talks in the Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha. He even held some meetings concerned with affairs of state. The most critical decision he took in this pavilion was to declare war on Russia. After a meeting with high ranking statesmen and Devlet Giray, the Khan of Crimea, they made the decision which resulted in the Prut Campaign.

The Huzur Lessons, religious discussions held by scholars in the presence of the sultan every month of Ramadan, were mostly held here at the time of Abdülhamid I; some Huzur Lessons were held here at the time of other sultans as well. When Hatice Sultan, the daughter of Abdülhamid I, was born the sultan distributed gold coins to the Enderun aghas. In this pavilion, sultans

would generally hold Qur'an recitations, meet with scholars, and watch sports and games being played in the garden.

*Photograph of the Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha (circa 1900)*

*The wooden structure and decorations of the Pavilion of Mustafa Pasha are unique.*

## The Box-tree Garden: Þimþirlik

Although it is known today as the Lion Garden, the garden with two pools is the Box-tree Garden (Şimşirlik). The buildings like the Mecidiye Pavilion make it hard to imagine how sports were played here, but these were built later on; the garden was previously an open field. The Enderun aghas played games which served to improve military skills (*cirit, labut, tomak,* etc.) and did shooting practice with rifles. The inspection of the cavalry was carried out in this garden. The cannons used for salutations at celebrations were kept here, but they were removed when Gülhane Park was being prepared.

## The Marble Throne of Murad IV

To the right of the Chief Physician's Room, there is a marble throne which was made for young Sultan Murad IV to watch the contests in the Box-tree Garden. It is reported that Murad IV was a tremendously strong man, and he joined in some of the sports events here. It is narrated on the epigraph behind the marble throne that, while on horseback at full gallop, Murad IV succeeded in hurling his oak club 115 *zira*s (nearly 80 meters) in February 1637. The

stated distance is even longer than the distance between the two goals of a soccer pitch. This gives us a good idea of how strong the sultan was.

## The Chief Physician's Room: Baþlala Tower

This two-storey structure was built at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. The 1.7 meter-thick walls of the ground floor indicate that it was built as a tower. Ancient engravings depict the building as a tower with a conical top. The upper floors fell into ruin over time, and the remaining two floors were covered with a roof. The chief official responsible for the education of the princes (*başlala*) and the chief physician under his command worked here.

Medical equipment and medicines were stored in this building. The other pharmacy in the palace was near the Campaign Chamber. The chief physician was the private doctor of the royal palace, and he was respected by the sultan. The chief physician would give instructions to the pharmacist for medicine for the sultan and his family. The medicine was placed in a bottle or bowl, and then it was sealed to be offered to the sultan. There were many different herbs

in the cabinets of the room downstairs which would be used for various health problems. Today, the medical equipment, medicine containers, medicine books, and medical charts are kept upstairs.

There are some very interesting medicines in the Chief Physician's Room. For instance, a curative paste from ground rubies mixed with spices, now-forgotten herbal prescriptions, creams and syrups can be found. It seems that they also preserved objects related to anatomy and zoology in this place. There are very interesting fossils, some reptiles, specimens of various animals in formaldehyde, and even a small fetal human skeleton.

## Sofa Mosque

Where Sofa Mosque and Mecidiye Pavilion now stand side by side in the Fourth Courtyard, there used to be the Arms Bearer Pavilion. The previous pavilion witnessed an unpleasant historical event. Selim III reformed the army and established a new military force named Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order). The members of the old army rebelled under the leadership of Kabakçı Mustafa, and they requested that the sultan be changed. Some statesmen gathered in the Arms Bearer Pavilion and decided to dethrone the sultan. When Mahmud II ascended the throne, he had the pavilion knocked down and built a mosque instead. He wished to erase the memories of that unpleasant event.

The residents of the Sofa Dormitory in particular would perform their prayers here. During the construction of the Mecidiye Pavilion, Sultan Abdülmecid had the Sofa Mosque repaired, as is mentioned in the epigraph. In contrast with the palace custom, the interior of the mosque is rather plain; it has no ornaments. At the right corner, there is a pretty minaret with single balcony.

*The Sofa Mosque in the Fourth Courtyard of the palace overlooking the Bosphorus. At the right corner, there is a pretty minaret with single balcony.*

## The Mecidiye Pavilion

Mecidiye Pavilion was built in the nineteenth century and is the last structure added to the palace. It has a rather different architectural style. It replaced the ruined Çadır Pavilion to the right of the fourth yard. Its architect was the Armenian master Serkis Balyan. The pavilion was built on the orders of Sultan Abdülmecid, the last sultan born at Topkapı, who loved watching the sea. Indeed, one can enjoy an excellent view of the Bosphorus from the Mecidiye Pavilion. Occasionally, Sultan Abdülmecid and Sultan Abdülaziz would come to Sarayburnu from Dolmabahçe in their special boat and then go the palace by carriage. Sultan Abdülhamid II would use the same way when he came from Yıldız Palace to visit the Holy Mantle.

The walls of the basement are from the Çadır Pavilion. There are even walls that have remained from the Byzantine period. The façade is made of sandstone. The influence of nineteenth-century French architecture is seen in the rectangular shaped pavilion. After the royal family moved from Topkapı Palace, they used this pavilion for certain ceremonies and they also hosted foreign guests here. It is the only place in Topkapı Palace with no memories of historical events. Part of it is used as a restaurant today.

*The Mecidiye Pavilion*

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4 Murad IV ascended the throne at 14 and died at 28. The only wife of Murad IV mentioned in historical records is Ayşe Sultan.

# HAREM
# THE FAMILY QUARTERS

View of the Harem section of the palace from the Justice Tower

# Harem

## The Education of Women in the Palace

After Sultan Orhan Gazi married Halofera (Nilüfer), the daughter of a Byzantine emperor, foreign brides continued to join the dynasty. For the Ottomans, race was of no consequence; the education at the palace was based on learning the Turkish language and Islamic culture. For example, Roxelana of Ukraine became Hürrem Sultan, the beloved wife of Süleyman the Magnificent. She learned Turkish so well that she was able to write poems in Turkish within a few years. Another queen mother from Ukraine was Hatice Turhan Sultan.

The Harem is the subject of wonder, speculation and above all many misconceptions, more than any other section of the palace. It was the prime section in protocol as the sultan's private home, with the queen mother in charge. The word "harem," comes from the Arabic word "haram" (forbidden). Contrary to common belief, the concept of a private section for the family is not peculiar to Eastern Muslims. Its counterparts existed in China, India, the Byzantine Empire, Ancient Persia, and even in Italy of the Renaissance period. In addition, the Ottoman Harem was an institution where slave girls—who were treated like maidservants—were educated.

Some of the girls educated at the Harem married Ottoman statesmen. The daughters and sisters of sultans also were married to statesmen as suitable matches. Until the sixteenth century, the Ottoman sultans married women of noble descent. After the sixteenth century, however, they stopped marrying women from other dynasties and preferred to choose their wives from the Harem. It should not be forgotten that most of the girls educated in the Harem married statesmen raised in the Enderun. In a way, the Harem served as a

school for future ladies.

Girls from different nations were taken to the Harem, including Croats, Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, and Georgians. There were also French and Italian girls. As in the example of the Enderun boys, there were very few exceptions of girls from Muslim families taken to the Harem. Neither girls nor boys were taken from Armenian and Jewish families, since they were urban populations. It was preferred that palace residents selected through the *devşirme* system did not have urban or Muslim relatives who might ask for privileges.

A royal wife whose son ascended the throne would be promoted to the highest rank in the Harem—the queen mother. Gülnuş Sultan enjoyed a long period at the palace as the beloved wife of Mehmed IV and then as Queen Mother when her two sons Mustafa II and Ahmed III ascended the throne successively. The people of the time loved her. After the reigns of her husband and elder son, when her younger son was dethroned, she too lost her position. Gülnuş Sultan lies in the yard of Valide Sultan (Queen Mother) Mosque in Üsküdar, one of the fruits of her charity. Queen mothers were greatly engaged in charity. Kösem Sultan, who was infamous for her interference in political matters, also fed the poor and supported poor girls so they could marry.

*Harem by Jean-Baptiste Hilaire, 1822. Louvre Museum.*

The inclusion of Harem women in politics and intrigue is peculiar to a limited period in Ottoman history. After Kösem Sultan was murdered, the Harem returned to its formerly peaceful life. However, Safiye Sultan (Bafo of Venice) and Hürrem Sultan have also been mentioned in intrigues.

Most women educated in the Harem made good marriages. Some of them married ordinary men, but these men should have been in the service of the state or a charitable foundation. The Harem women who did not marry stayed at the palace. Some of them were promoted to high ranks, and some did

simple tasks like cleaning. Some of the women lived outside the palace when they married. These women had an important social function as the people of the neighborhood learned fine language and manners from the palace ladies.

No matter what tales are told about the Harem, the reality was not so sensational. Unfortunately, some people wish to put their erotic fantasies in a written form and choose the Harem as their setting. The entertainments and love affairs of European palaces have no counterpart in the Ottoman Harem. Those who make up the Harem stories show little understanding of the talented and intelligent women educated at the Harem or their high cultural level.

## The Sections of the Harem

The Harem is located to the left of the Divan Square, behind the Council Hall, with a view of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. The Harem is like a labyrinth with its numerous rooms, pavements, corridors, and dormitories. The Harem is famous for its tiles and the glorious examples of Ottoman calligraphy on the walls.

## The Carriage Gate

The gate through which groups of visitors are admitted today was the Harem's opening to the outer world. It is located between the Council Hall and the Halberdiers' Dormitory. The name "Carriage" comes from the fact that a Harem woman leaving or returning passed the gate in a carriage together with a eunuch. Otherwise the women would not leave the palace on their own, whether on horseback or on foot.

Women visiting the Harem would also use this gate which was guarded by the eunuchs. The women who lived outside the palace after marriage would also pay visits to the Harem. Apart from these, doctors and teachers from outside used this gate. The Carriage Gate opened to a passage before the actual entrance to the Harem.

*The Carriage Gate is made of iron.*

## The Domed Vault: Dolaplı Kubbe

There are built-in cabinets at both sides of the vault. Two of the cabinets were for the goods bought for the Harem, and the others were for keeping the record books of the charity funds of the two sacred cities, Mecca and Medina, and the money bags to be sent there. The latter would not be opened or touched by anybody but the chief eunuch.

## The Pavement with a Fountain

The paved area after the Domed Vault is named after the fountain at the corner, which was transferred to the privy chamber of Murad III. The eunuchs stood sentry in this area. The Sultan's Riding Track, the Curtain Gate, the Mosque of the Black Aghas, and the Tower of Justice are connected with this area. In the vaulted section upstairs, there were the rooms of the eunuchs. The walls around the paved area are covered with seventeenth century tiles. The panels display the Beautiful Names of God (*Asma al-Husna*), the name of the Holy Prophet and the Ten Companions (*Ashara al-Mubashara*). The wide band of calligraphy on the walls about Mehmed IV consists of praises and prayers for the sultan. The inscription on the door of the tower is a saying of the Prophet meaning, "Ruling with justice for one hour is better than one year's supererogatory worship."

*Pavement with a Fountain (Şadırvanlı Taşlık)*

## The Sultan's Riding Track and the Curtain Gate

The Curtain Gate is opposite the Tower of Justice and it opens to the Sultan's Riding Track, which is made of fixed pebbles in order to prevent the horses from slipping. This stony track was constructed at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror. By tradition, a newly enthroned sultan would pass from here and ride to Eyüp Mosque for the Sword Ceremony. Before the new sultan rode out of the palace, red shawls would be laid on his way from the Shawl Gate (Şal Kapısı) to the Throne Gate. This is where the name of the gate behind the Archeology Museum comes from. The sultan would also use this way when he wished to go out in disguise. The work of calligraphy above the Curtain Gate is a Qur'anic verse, which can be translated as, *"(God commands you) …when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what God exhorts you to do; assuredly, God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing"* (Nisa 4:58).

*The Sultan's Riding Track*

The Head Gatekeeper's Quarters is a typical example of seventeenth-century Ottoman architecture with its main dome in the middle and the barrel vaulting. It is a spot through which the sultans passed while entering and

leaving the palace.

*The Black Agha's Mosque located to the left of the Fountain Hall*

## The Black Aghas' Mosque

This mosque is located to the left of the Fountain Hall. The door near the Curtain Gate opens on a long corridor, and another door in the corridor opens to this mosque. There is another entrance through the porticos at the Black Aghas' Pavement. Above one of the doors from inside, the inscription on marble is a wish for intercession on Judgment Day by the Messenger of God; and the inscription above the other door is a prayer meaning, "O God, please protect us from Hellfire and take us to your Paradise."

The walls of the mosque are completely covered with tiles, leaving no gap. There are depictions of Mecca and Medina on the tiles of the prayer niche. The preacher's seat, decorated with mother-of-pearl, was made on the orders of Damat İbrahim Pasha of Nevşehir, the famous statesman of the Tulip Period.

## The Black Aghas' Pavement

This paved area is a long and enclosed corridor with porticos on both sides. It is named after the Dormitory of the Black Aghas on the left. It is also known as the Passage with Porticos (Revaklı Yol).

The Black Aghas' Pavement is the first such paved area one encounters in the Harem, and certain places used by the black aghas open onto this area. The walls on both sides are decorated with tiles. In addition to the actual

Harem entrance, another gate opening here is the Aviary Gate, which connects to the Enderun Courtyard. To the right of the pavement there are the Quarters of the Dwarfs and the Quarters of the Accountants, which consist of two rooms. The accountants were an important branch of the aghas. The head accountant and his two assistants were appointed by the sultan himself. They would keep watch outside the sultan's room and announce the sultan's orders to the residents of the Harem and the members of the council. They were mannerly and witty people and able to converse with the sultans. The Quarters of the Accountants were built adjacent to the Tower of Justice. The dwarfs lived next door to the accountants. Further away, on the right-hand side, there is the room of the chief treasurer who was responsible for the financial matters of the Harem.

*The Black Aghas' Pavement*

## The Dormitory of the Black Aghas: Kara Aðalar Koðuþu

The black aghas were responsible for the security of the Harem. They were organized in a certain hierarchy, and their accomodation was also arranged according to rank. The novices stayed upstairs.

The dormitory is located between the mosque and the school of princes. It consists of a stone-based long corridor and rooms at the sides on the three floors. It is one of the few places of the Harem which has remained in its original form. The verse written above the door reads, *"The believers are but brothers…"* (Hujurat 49:10). Due to its ornamented mantelpiece, this place is called the Fireside (Ocakbaşı). This magnificent fireplace was designed for heating the rooms in the dormitory. It also provided warm water for the black aghas to make ablutions.

There are eleven rooms on the first floor of the dormitory. These are the rooms of the apartments of the chief gatekeeper. The ones on the right are the dining room and the larder, the ones on the left are guestrooms and the

bedroom. The walls are decorated with unique tiles. The inscription on the fountain of the dining room displays the Qur'anic verse, *" ...and their Lord will favor them with the service of a pure drink"* (Insan 76:21).

The upper floors of the dormitory are plain; there are no tiles or other decorations. The Bath of the Aghas is near the Sultan's Riding Ramp. The tiled rooms of the dormitory facing the pavement have been renewed according to the original form of the building. In one of these rooms, models of the chief gatekeeper and the chief eunuch can be seen.

The long epigraphs on the outer walls of the porticos in front of the Black Aghas' Pavement are reports of charitable acts by the sultan and the residents of the Harem.

## The Quarters of the Chief Eunuch of the Harem: Darüssaade Aðası Dairesi

This is a two-storey stone building to the right of the Dormitory of the Black Aghas. Downstairs there is the main room, a small bathroom, catering rooms, and a coffee hearth. Upstairs, there is the main sitting room for men (*selamlık*), the dining hall, and other rooms. The great tile panel depicting the Ka'ba is famous. The walls are covered with seventeenth-century tiles. There is a couplet wishing the guests well on the wall of the dining hall. It is possible to pass to the School of Princes by a stairway.

*Corridor in the Black Aghas' Dormitory*

*A room in the Black Aghas' Dormitory.*

## The School of Princes

The School of Princes was built in the seventeenth century. The building took its final form in the eighteenth century when Beşir Ağa was in charge. The Baroque style is dominant in this final renovation. The school consists of two main rectangular sections. The first section has a plain ceiling and the walls are covered with colored tiles featuring the Ka'ba. The second section has a decorated wooden dome. There is a Baroque-style marble mantelpiece. The bookshelves and niches are beautiful examples of rococo decoration. The tile band circling above the bookshelves features the Beautiful Names of God (Asma al-Husna) and a famous poem praising the Prophet (Qasida al-Burda).

According to palace tradition, the princes and princesses would begin to be educated when they were four. They would come to the school to study under their educators (Lala). The lessons were given by teachers from outside the palace. The chief eunuch of the Harem was responsible for this school, and he would arrange the teachers to come. The first things students learned were how to read and write, have lessons in the Qur'an, and the basic practices of religion.

All the statesmen would attend the ceremony named "Bedi Basmala" (Beginning in the Name of God). In the ceremony, the sheikhulislam would give the first lesson; it was teaching of the *basmala* (in the name of God). This is where the ceremony name comes from. After the first lesson, the sheikhulislam would pray for the children's success.

*The stairs to the School of Princes*

*The second section of the School of Princes has a decorated wooden dome. The tile panes are successful examples of Ottoman tile-making.*

## Harem Entrance Gate: The Gate of the Sultanate

The Gate of the Sultanate separates the aghas from the Harem. It also serves as a screen to prevent the actual door and inside of the Harem from being seen from the Black Aghas' Pavement. This gate opens to the Guard Station where three main sections of the Harem intersect. The verse written above it is translated as follows: *"O you who believe! Do not enter the Prophet's rooms (in his house) unless you have been given leave…"* (Ahzab 33:53).

*The Gate of the Sultanate separates the aghas from the Harem. It serves as a screen to prevent the inside of the Harem from being seen from the Black Aghas' Pavement.*

There are motifs of flowers and trees symbolizing the gardens of Paradise

on the side of the gate which faces the Quarters of the Chief Eunuch. The epigraph reads, "Please intercede for us, O Messenger of God, intercede for us, O Beloved Servant of God!"

## The Guard Station

The eunuchs kept a round-the-clock watch at the Guard Station. It was the farthest spot eunuchs were allowed to go. Its wall is covered with a beautiful tile panel. There used to be a drum and drumstick hanging on the wall. These were used in the month of Ramadan for waking people up for the pre-dawn meal, as well as informing the maidservants when the meals had arrived. After the eunuchs had brought the meal and left the corridor, the maidservants would open their door and carry the meals in. The dishes would be left in the same place after the meal.

At the Guard Station there is a cheval glass and a seat for visitors and vendors. In a way, the Guard Station also served as a waiting lounge. The thick walls date back to the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, and they are among the main walls of the palace. These walls separate the Divan Square, Enderun Square, and Harem. The door on the right of the Guard Station leads to the Golden Passageway, the middle one to the Queen Mother's Courtyard, and the one on the left to the Maidservants' Courtyard and the Courtyard of the Sultan's Wives through the Maidservants' Hallway. There is the most common prayer in the Harem on the epigraph of the Maidservants' Gate, "O Opener of doors, open for us best of doors!"

The inscription on the gate opening to the Harem pavement is a Qur'anic verse:

> *I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord. No living creature is there but He holds it by its forelock and keeps it under His complete control. Surely, my Lord is on a straight path (He governs all that exists and carries out His decrees rightly and with absolute justice).* (Hud 11:56)

The guards on duty were under constant inspection. Through a wall at the Aviary side, it is possible to ascend to the mezzanines connected to the guards' building by a concealed stairway. Opposite this stairway, there is another one leading to the chief treasurer's room. The chief treasurer could monitor the guard on duty from the mezzanines. Extreme care was shown for

the protection of the sultan's home.

## The Golden Passageway

The narrow corridor extending between the Guard Station and the Privy Chamber Courtyard is known as the Golden Passageway. There is no definite information about where the name comes from. It is said that on their way to the enthronement ceremony, princes scattered gold for the dwellers of the Harem. It is also narrated that the sultan would pass along this way on Eid days and scatter one or two purses of gold. The Golden Passageway leads to the Apartments of the Holy Mantle. It is approximately forty-five meters long and its width varies between two and four meters. The ground is paved and the walls are covered with tiles. A wooden structure was added to the old one to make more space; this contradicts the architectural style. The Golden Passageway was how the sultans went to the Royal Garden (Hasbahçe) or to the city. It is a passage that connects all the sections in the Harem.

## The Pavement of the Maidservants and the Sultan's Wives

Located at the end of the Common Gate gateway, this paved area was built in the sixteenth century together with the Black Aghas' Pavement. Even though it was renovated after the Harem fires, it has lost its original form since a part of the porticos was enclosed.

The fire in 1665 affected the architecture of the Harem very much. During the construction work after the fire, new rooms were obtained by enclosing some porticos, and this turned the Harem into a narrow and labyrinthine place. This smallest pavement of the Harem is surrounded by the chambers of the sultan's wives, the larder, the maidservants' rooms, the laundry, and a bath. The bath is located at the left and it is one of the oldest baths in the palace. The views of nature depicted on the walls of the rooms facing the pavement are noteworthy works from the eighteenth century.

*The Pavement of the Maidservants and the Sultan's Wives*

*Hürrem Sultan, the beloved wife of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent*

## The Chambers of the Sultan's Wives: Kadın Efendi Haseki Daireleri

These chambers are located to the right of the Pavement of the Maidservants and the Sultan's Wives. Inside was running hot and cold water. The walls are covered with seventeenth-century tiles. As in the rest of the Harem, the decorations were designed to please the women. The windows face the Harem garden.

The different decorations, sizes, and the domes of the apartments reflected the hierarchy between a sultan's wives. Above the coffee hearth in the corner, there are three pictures of the Bosphorus, its pavilions and greenery. They are a typical example of eighteenth-century naturalist Turkish art and of the decorative taste in the Harem.

*The fireplace in the Chamber of Sultan's Wives*

## The Dormitory of the Maidservants

There is nothing like this structure in the history of Turkish architecture. The architectural style reflects the routine and disciplined life in the Harem. The entresols supported by marble pillars were later connected with wooden partitions to make more space. The dormitory was built with a capacity to allow 20–25 maidservants to stay on each floor. The dormitory can take around 60–70 maidservants in total. There is no passage from one floor to another from inside. One could enter the entresols only through the Apartments of the Kalfas. This planning is interesting in that it gives us an idea about the education and discipline in the Harem.

The dormitory was heated by a voluminous fireplace. When the fireplace did not provide sufficient heat, braziers were brought to the rooms. However, the braziers were one of the chief causes of fires in the palace. In conformity with the hierarchy in the Harem, the rooms have no decorations.

## The Forty Stairs

The stairs connecting the arched door near the Dormitory of the Maidservants to the garden where the Harem Hospital was located are known as the Forty Stairs. Although the number "forty" is used in the name of the staircase, the actual number of stairs is fifty-two. "Forty" is sometimes used as a phrase in Turkish to express quantity. This must be the reason for the name. At the sides of the stairway, there are doors opening to the larder, rooms, and the hospital units. As the stairway descends in parallel with the skirts of the

cape, it is rather steep.

## The Harem Hospital

The hospital is a small complex with an open space in the middle. It was built in the Harem Courtyard after the fire in 1665. Some of the sixteenth-century walls separating the Harem from the Royal Garden became a part of the building. The hospital has some two-storey sections as well. Unlike the rest of the Harem, the hospital stands as a separate building, isolating the sick from the rest. There are no decorations in the structure. The same furnace provided hot water for both the bath and the laundry.

At a corner of the hospital, there is the place for washing the dead (*gasilhane*). When someone died in the hospital, the body was washed, placed in a coffin, and then delivered to the halberdiers through the Funeral Gate.

*The hospital is a small complex with an open space in the middle. It was built in the Harem Courtyard after the fire in 1665.*

*Unlike the rest of the Harem, the hospital stands as a separate building, isolating the sick from the rest of the palace.*

## The Queen Mother's Courtyard

The Queen Mother's Courtyard is located beside the Guard Station. It consists of a paved area surrounded by the apartments of high-ranking Harem women. On the side of the Golden Horn Bay are the Queen Mother's Apartments and the Sultan's Bath. The Gate of the Sultanate which opens to the Fireplace Hall is near the baths. On the side of the Maidservants' Courtyard, there are the apartments of the female officials and the Harem

Pharmacy. There is a door on the side of the Enderun Courtyard opening to the Golden Passageway. At the side of the Maidservants' Dormitory there is a marble fountain. Like many other fountains in the palace, there is a Qur'anic verse above the fountain, which can be translated as *"...and their Lord will favor them with the service of a pure drink"* (Insan 76:21). The epigraph reveals that the fountain was built in 1667. Next to the fountain is a door opening to the Maidservants' Dormitory. The walls facing the paved courtyard are covered with tiles belonging to different centuries.

*The Queen Mother's Courtyard*

## Queen Mother's Chamber: Valide Sultan Dairesi

The most elegantly decorated and comfortable section of the Harem is spared for the mother of the sultan. A favored woman of the Harem who had given birth to a son of the sultan (haseki), would go to the old palace upon the death of her husband with the other wives. The main reason the wives were sent from the Harem to the old palace was to make room for newcomers because of the limited capacity of the Harem. The favored wife, or any other wife, would return to the palace if her son ascended the throne, this time with greater splendor.

The date of the epigraph (1667) reveals that the Queen Mother's Chamber was rebuilt after the Great Fire of the Harem. This complex contains rooms for several purposes, such as hosting guests, worshiping, and so on. In addition, there is a small kitchen, a larder, a bath, guestrooms, a fountain and a toilet. The rooms which can be visited today are the bedrooms and the prayer room.

The wide corridor at the entrance was formed by enclosing some of the porticos of the Queen Mother's Courtyard. To the right of this corridor is the waiting lounge with rococo-style decorations and beautiful landscapes. The Queen Mother's Kitchen is opposite the waiting lounge.

There are three interconnected rooms: a high-domed hall, a bedroom and a

small prayer room. The lower walls of the hall are decorated with tiles, and the upper walls are decorated with beautiful landscapes painted in the nineteenth century. The Ayat al-Kursi from the Qur'an (Baqara 2:255) and various prayers are written on the walls. The built-in cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl and the doors are very old. The room has a furnace covered with tiles and a marble fountain. Now the room contains velvet sofas and dining equipment. The queen mother would eat her meals here. There is a tile panel depicting the Ka'ba in the prayer room on the wall in the direction of the qibla. The structures around the Ka'ba added in Ottoman times—some of which no longer exists—are also displayed in this panel. The balcony of this room was converted into a room so that it could support the chamber of Queen Mother Mihrişah Sultan which was built on top of it. The rooms beneath the queen mother's quarters were used by the maidservants who served there.

*The lower walls of the Queen Mother's Chamber were covered with Kütahya tiles after the fire in 1665. The upper walls are decorated with pictures of beautiful, landscapes painted in the nineteenth century.*

*The detail from the Queen Mother's Chamber*

## The Chamber of Mihriþah Valide Sultan

Mihrişah Valide Sultan was the mother of Selim III. The sultan had this chamber added on top of the queen mother's room for his mother. It can be reached by a stairway from the chamber of Selim III. It is known that the sultan usually met with his mother in this chamber. It consists of two rooms. The flat and gilded ceiling has baroque and rococo-style decorations. There is a marble mantelpiece inside the chamber, but there is no fountain, as in the queen mother's room. The tile band of calligraphy along the walls tells us that the chamber was built for the Queen Mother Mihrişah Sultan. The colorful decorations and pictures inside are splendid. The vivid imaginary views of nature are the first examples of Turkish naturalist painting.

*The Chamber of Mihrişah Sultan (top floor) resembles old Turkish houses with cantilevered bay making the house itself appeared to stretch out in search of a better view.*

## The Throne Gate

The Throne Gate is the farthest spot sultans would go on horseback. The sultan would depart from here for the Sword Ceremony in Eyüp Mosque after

ascending the throne. Before the Sword Ceremony, a red carpet would be laid from here to the Curtain Gate. On the outer side the proclamation of faith (kalima al-tawhid) and inside, a wish for the Prophet's intercession on Judgment Day is written. The wings of the gate are inlaid with mother-of-pearl. On leaving for a military campaign, the sultan would, as a sign of respect for the elderly in Ottoman culture, kiss his mother's hand and ask her to pray for God's help, and he would say farewell to his wives and children here. There is a stepping stone near the gate for the sultan to mount comfortably. Then the sultan would ride out of the Harem.

## The Apartment of the Treasurer Usta

The female officials known as "usta" stayed here and kept watch over both the paved courtyards of the queen mother and that of the maidservants. The entrance from the queen mother's side is larger in size and is ornamented. The other entrance is thought to have been built in the sixteenth century.

## The Baths of the Sultan and the Queen Mother

The baths were built in the sixteenth century by the famous architect Sinan. They are the most elegant baths in the palace. There is no architectural difference between the two baths; it is the decorations that make the difference.

The first section of the bath is the dressing room which is lit from above. The next section is the actual bath known as "the heat." The domes with glass windows have survived up until our time despite some damage from fires. The sultan's bathing place is on the left, separated with a gilded bronze grating. It was added at the time of Osman III and is thought to be a precaution against a possible assassination. After having his bath, the sultan would have a rest in the area named "warmth," and then return to the dressing room to leave the bath.

The Queen Mother's Bath was renovated on the orders of Turhan Sultan, the mother of Mehmed IV. In Turkish architecture, the men's bath and the women's bath would be built adjacent so as to save energy by heating both sides from a single furnace. Another noteworthy fact is that the typical scent of Turkish baths is still detectable, although the baths have not been used for decades.

*The interior domes of the bath*

# The Privy Chambers

The entrance to the Privy Chambers is opposite the bath. The structure consists of interconnected rooms and corridors. It was used as the sultan's bedroom beginning with Osman III, and the apartments of Abdülhamid I and Selim III are also here. The last renovation work in this section was carried out at the time of Selim III.

## The Privy Chamber of Abdülhamid I and the Treasury

The Privy Chamber of Abdülhamid I has undergone serious renovation work, and the name of Osman III is mentioned in the epigraph. A couplet praising Abdülhamid I on the interior wall indicates that the chamber was built at his time. The ceiling of this rectangular room is flat and is decorated with blue and red ornamentation on a green base. There are elaborate decorations on the wings of the door. The interior is well lit because of the twelve windows. There is a black and white marble fountain on the left. The gilded mantelpiece with colorful ornamentation is very impressive. The couplet in Persian written on the stone framing of the mirror says:

*The fountain of life, appealing to the heart*
*The source of infinite delight.*

There used to be an entrance from the Imperial Hall. Abdülhamid I had that entrance closed and turned into a wardrobe. The present entrance was opened from the corridor. The inscription on the entrance of the chamber is a prayer for the sultan. There are frescos below the ceiling.

Abdülhamid I reigned during the period of decline of the state. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which was one of the greatest losses for the Ottomans,

was signed at his time. Upon hearing the news about the fall of a castle, he had a stroke and later on passed away in this chamber on 7 April, 1789.

*The interior of the privy chamber of Sultan Abdülhamid I.*
*The gilded mantelpiece in the privy chamber is impressive.*

## The Privy Chamber of Selim III: The Music Practice Room

The Privy Chamber of Selim III is entered through a passage from the apartment of Abdülhamid I, added to the front part of the structure. There are windows on three sides. A passage converted from a window opens to the Pavilion of Osman III. The square-shaped room is an example of Turkish rococo style, with a wooden ceiling and walls ornamented in gilded relief.

The fireplace in the room is famous. The wall above the monumental mantelpiece is decorated with pictures. The blue-white Dutch tiles on the niche indicate that no fire has ever been lit inside. Most probably, the room was heated with embers brought in large braziers.

A wooden stairway ascends to the chamber of Selim III, the composer sultan. The sultan used this room for calligraphy, poetry, and musical composition. The second name of the room pertains to his music practice. The panels on the wall display the name of God, the names of God's Messenger, and the Ten Companions. Over the mirrors, there is the *basmala*, Qur'anic verses, the monogram of Selim III, and a stanza praising him.

The apartment was also known as the Room of the Sacred Strand; a hair strand from the beard of the Prophet was kept in this room. The commodious room appealed to the artistic spirit of Selim III and provided him with inspiration for deep reflection. It is narrated that the sultan lived downstairs here after he was dethroned. Unhappily, he was killed by rebels, and his body was cast somewhere between the Audience Hall and the Gate of Felicity.

## The Terrace and Pavilion of Osman III

The Pavilion of Osman III is the last pavilion to be added to the Imperial Terrace. The spacious stone terrace has a pool in the middle; thus it is also known as the Terrace with a Pool. There are flowerbeds on both sides of the pool. The pavilion looks toward Gülhane Park. Construction work began at the time of Mahmud I and the building is thought to have been completed at the time of Osman III. However, there is no epigraph mentioning the name of Osman III, although there is the monogram of Mahmud II on the monumental door and a couplet in calligraphy written in *taliq* style. The pavilion consists of a main room that extends to the back with two rooms to the sides. The main room was planned as a council hall, and this strengthens the idea that the sultan may have resided here. The gilded ceiling is rather ornamented and bright light emphasizes this impression. The windows face Gülhane Park. The bed recess with carvings opposite the fireplace is supported by gilded pillars.

*The privy chamber of Selim III*

Osman III was famous for wandering around Istanbul in disguise. In fact, this was a custom of the Ottoman sultans in order to gain first-hand experience of ordinary society, as mentioned in the section about the Stables for Disguise. Osman III practiced this method of disguised visits very frequently.

## Fireplace Hall: Ocaklı Sofa

The greatest fireplace in the Harem is found in this hall. It is located near the Apartments of the Sultan's Wives. It used to have an opening to the path leading to Apartments of the Sultan's Wives and from there to the Apartments of the Princes. After the fire in 1665, the hall was reconstructed on the orders of Mehmed IV. The dome of the hall is decorated with seventeenth-century tiles and penwork designs. The famous bronze fireplace which the hall is named after faces the entrance door. It is surrounded by a gilded grate. The braziers to heat the different sections of the Harem were filled here. The servants constantly hurried to supply wood for the fire. After they had put

embers into the braziers, the mantelpiece was locked until the next round.

*The Pavilion of Osman III is the last pavilion to be added to the Imperial Terrace. It consists of a main room that extends to the back with two rooms to the sides.*

A prayer meaning, "O God, help your servant and caliph," is written on the upper wall. There are invocations of good wishes for the sultan written above the doors.

## The Imperial Hall: Hünkar Sofası

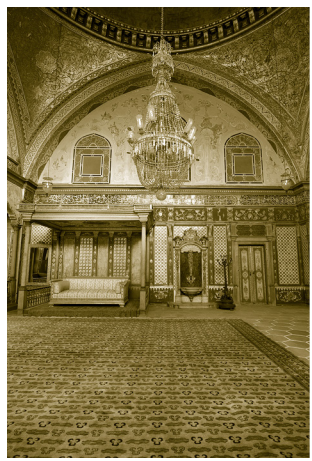
The spacious hall was used for miscellaneous purposes such as ceremonies for exchanging compliments on festive days, spiritual lessons, weddings, ceremonies, and accepting guests. It was also known as the Compliments Hall. The hall was probably formed by enclosing what used to be an open part of the courtyard in the seventeenth century. In some publications, it is claimed that entertainments were held here. Obviously, such a picture does not accord with a hall where the Huzur Lessons, the princes' first lesson of their Islamic education, recitations of poems praising the Prophet and the Holy Qur'an in Ramadan were carried out—a hall full of calligraphic works featuring verses from the Qur'an.

The Imperial Hall has several doors opening to the Fruit Room, to the Privy Chamber of Murad III, and to the Terrace with a Pool (Havuzlu Taşlık). This makes one think that this place could have been a part of the courtyard.

The wings of the doors have decorations in relief. Compared to the other compact sections of the Harem, the Imperial Hall is the most spacious and beautiful part. The great dome rests on four pointed arches decorated with penwork. At the center of the great dome, some of the Beautiful Names of God are written with gilding on a green base color. On the walls, verses 258–261 of Sura Baqara from the Qur'an are written in white letters on a blue base.

The canopied throne was in the middle where now a sofa is placed. The ceiling inside the portico has eye-catching decorations. There are fixed window seats (*sedir*), along the windows. One of the two doors with mirrors

opens to the Ahmed III Fruit Room, and the other opens to the stairs to the entresol. The entresol resembles the balconies for women in mosques. The women in the Harem would watch the ceremonies of compliments on festive days from here. The twenty-six windows provide a well-lit interior. The absence of a mantelpiece suggests that the hall was probably heated by the hot water from the baths circulating in pipes under the hall. There are three marble fountains. Some of the great mirrors on the walls have their own frames decorated with figures of fruits and grape branches.



*The Imperial Hall is the main hall of the Harem. Although it was built in the late 16th century, the decorations of the Imperial Hall were later renovated in 18th century Baroque style.*

## The Privy Chamber of Ahmed I

This chamber was built for Ahmed I in 1608 adjacent to that of his grandfather Murad III, and it has a view of the Elephant Garden. Owing to the bookshelves of the sultan, the room is mistakenly known as Ahmed I's reading room. This mistake is made even in captions of photographs taken in the 1890s.

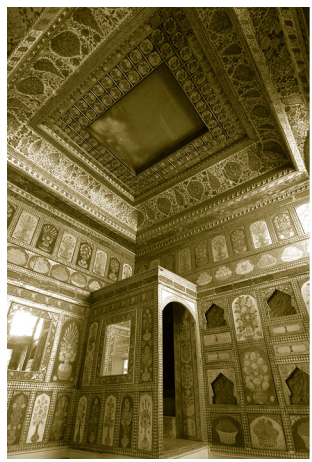
The room resembles a tile exhibition with a rich variety of İznik tiles up to the level where the walls reach the small dome. Entering from the door, we see three windows on the opposite wall, and three to the right. To the left, there are built-in cabinets and a lovely fountain. The window frames, cabinet doors, and the drawers are beautiful examples of the mother-of-pearl artistry in the palace.

There are couplets of poetry and prayers on the tiles, written in *sülüs* and *nesih* style calligraphy. The last four *sura*s of the Qur'an are written on the

four sides just under the dome.

Ahmed I ascended the throne at thirteen years of age and passed away at twenty-eight. The Sultanahmet Mosque was built in his name. Ahmed I wrote poems under the penname Bahti. A deep lover of the Prophet, the sultan wore a crest bearing a stanza he wrote in praise of the Prophet inscribed in gold:

> *If only I could wear it always like my crown,*
> *The footprint of the Sultan of all Messengers,*
> *The owner of the footprint is himself the rose and garden of happiness,*
> *O Ahmed, go and touch your face to the foot of that rose.*



*The Fruit Room*

## The Fruit Room: Privy Chamber of Ahmed III

The Fruit Room is located between the Imperial Hall and the Ahmed I Reading Room. The room faces the Terrace of Osman III. This small room with a low ceiling was built as the Privy Chamber of Ahmed III and other sultans occasionally dined here. The name came from the fruit figures on the walls. The wooden panels covering the walls are full of figures of fruits and flowers. Using wooden ornamentation instead of tile was a significant change for the Harem. Placing mirrors in the wooden panes was also a novelty in decoration. The figures drawn in miniature technique show signs that Ottoman art in the Tulip Period was beginning to be influenced by the West. There is a mantelpiece with plaster relief on the front wall of the square-shaped room.

## The Privy Chamber of Murad III

The Privy Chamber of Murad III represents firsts in many respects. Built by the famous architect Sinan in 1579, it was the first privy chamber in the palace. It served both as the office and the private room of the sultan. The Privy Chamber of Murad III presents the peak Ottoman art and architecture reached in the sixteenth century with Sinan and the Ottomans' elegant taste in the art of decoration. This majestic structure is the greatest privy chamber and the oldest pavilion in the Harem.

It is possible to enter the chamber from the Privy Chamber of Ahmed I and from the Imperial Hall. The first thing that strikes the visitor is the magnificent composition of sixteenth-century İznik tiles.

A band of Qur'anic verses (Ayat al-Kursi and Nisa 4:57–59) are written in calligraphy along the walls, in white letters on a blue base. The windows, dome, wings of doors and cabinets, mantelpiece, and the fountain are all good examples of Ottoman style. The elaborate ornamentation on the cabinet wings and windows suggest that the room belongs to a sultan. There is nothing like the monumental marble fountain with three faucets and three basins in the Harem. The basins maintained a pleasant babbling sound in the room. The fountain is decorated with floral motifs. The square-shaped room is covered by a rather sizeable dome eleven meters in diameter. The sphere hanging from the dome symbolizes that the place belongs to the sultan.

The privy chamber of Murad III is a two-storey structure. It is unique in the palace in terms of the fact that it holds both winter and summer pavilions under the same roof.

The Serdap Pavilion downstairs has a decorative pool in the middle. The fountain in the middle was brought from the Fountain Hall during a restoration and has remained here. Although concocted Harem stories claim that it was filled as a milk-bath, nobody bothers to think how much milk it would take in reality, and the pool is obviously too small for a rowboat. However, tourist guides do not find the simple reality that it was a summer residence where water served to cool the air as amusing.

## Twin Mansions

The Twin Mansions are located near the privy chamber of Murad III, and the structure is made up of two adjacent buildings, as the name suggests. The first one is known as the Domed Mansion, and the other is known as the

Mansion of Mehmed IV. The former is also known as the Prince's Chamber and the latter the Heir's Chamber. In time, new rooms were obtained by dividing up the mansions with wooden walls. Later on, these were removed with the aim of restoring the structure to its original form.

There is a grand mantelpiece inside surrounded with tile motifs. There are built-in cabinets the wings of which are inlaid with mother-of-pearl. To the upper left side of the mantelpiece, a band of calligraphy on a blue base featuring couplets from the Ode to the Mantle (*Qasida al-Burda*) in praise of the Prophet. Built-in fountains in the windows, which became popular in the palace in the seventeenth century, can be seen here. They also provide a pleasant babbling sound in the room.

The mansion of Mehmed IV has a flat ceiling and no dome. The entrance is made from a door obtained by converting one of the windows in the privy chamber of Murad III. Different from its twin, gilded penwork is more dominant in the decorations used in the mansion of Mehmed IV, rather than tiles. There are also built-in fountains in the windows.

The epigraphs on the doors are Qur'anic verses. The first mansion has a square plan and is covered by an ornamented dome. All the walls are covered with colored panes of tiles with floral figures.

*The Twin Mansions are made up of two adjacent buildings, as the name suggests.*

## The Meeting Place of the Jinn

It was rumored in the Harem for years that the jinn gathered around the porticos extending toward the Twin Mansion. It is thought that this story was

made up in order to keep the maidservants away from the Treasury and the Princes' Apartments.

## The Harem Mosque

The mosque is located before the Aviary, to the right of the Golden Passageway, and right behind the Ağalar Mosque. The door opening to the Golden Passageway is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The domeless mosque is located just beside the Ağalar Mosque so that the women praying here could join the prayer led by the imam in the Ağalar Mosque. At the time of Osman III, the mosque was renovated with baroque-style marble carvings and Tekfur Sarayı workshop tiles. Although sultans occasionally came here as well, the prayer room was essentially used by queen mothers, favorite wives, and the chief eunuch.

## The Ýkbals' Courtyard

This is an open, paved area between the Twin Pavilions, the Apartments of the İkbals, and the Mabeyn Apartments. The wall of the Apartments of the Princes facing this area is furnished with colorful tiles. The hallway between the Apartments of the İkbals and the Apartments of the Princes is surrounded by a portico of fourteen pillars. The marble barriers at the side of the pool were brought here after the fire of Çırağan Palace in 1910. The word "ikbal" means "fortune." This name was given to the slave women the sultan chose for himself and they ranked after the Kadın Efendis, the official concubines of the sultan. The İkbals appeared in the palace toward the end of the seventeenth century. Abdülhamid I had a chamber for İkbals. The Apartments of the İkbals consists of five rooms in a row near the Golden Passageway. The structure was formed by enclosing the area under the porticos and the entire structure is made of wood. It resembles Anatolian houses in this respect. Every İkbal had a separate room. There are landscapes decorating the walls of the rooms. The glass sections (*çırağma*) in the wall help to spread the light.

The bedrooms are on the entresol. The rooms protruding from the building are connected to the portico with wooden supports (see picture). The low-ceilinged entresol behind these wooden supports was used as a dormitory for maidservants. The placement reflects the hierarchy in the Harem.

The most noteworthy room of the Apartments of the İkbals is the Chamber

of the Head Wife at the end of the corridor which is composed of three adjacent sections. This apartment is better than the others with respect to its size and decorations. It is located just above the Privy Chamber of Abdülhamid I and a stairway passing through a cabinet connects it to the sultan's chamber.

## The Apartments of Abdülhamid I: Mabeyn-i Hümâyun Dairesi

These apartments are adjacent to the tower of Selim I, located near the Courtyard of the İkbals and under the Chamber of the Head Wife. Abdülhamid I preferred to live here with his wife, and he used his privy chamber as a winter residence. Entering the Harem from the Carriage Gate, it is the final building in the Harem. The structure was called "Mabeyn-i Hümayun"—the Imperial Mabeyn (place in-between)—since it is located between the Harem and rest of the palace. In a way, it separates the official areas of the palace and the private sections belonging to the sultan.

The apartments consist of a hall and two rooms; one is called the Mirror Room and the other the Stone Room or the Treasury Room. The walls of the hall are decorated with Dutch tiles with floral designs. A rococo-style marble mantelpiece adds to the beauty of the hall. There is a passageway through a cabinet from the hall to the Chamber of the Head Wife which was chiefly used for service. The Stone Room, which is thought to have been used as a larder, was built upon the foundations of a tower which was left from the time of Selim I. The Mirror Room was used as the council hall. It is named after the crystal mirrors used in the windows instead of glass. The decoration is enriched by additional mirrors and rococo ornamentation is intensely used. The famous Ottoman art of stained glass (*vitray*) is used in the upper windows.

In the Mirror Room, there is a verbal description of the Prophet (*hilya*) by Hakani Mehmed Bey written on a black base with gold lettering. The monogram on the Mirror Room door is by Abdülhamid I.

*The İkbals' Courtyard*

## The Quarters of Cevri Kalfa

Located over the Golden Passageway, the Quarters of Cevri Kalfa are reached by a narrow stone stairway. At the end of the stairway, there are two doors; the one on the left opens to the Quarters of Cevri Kalfa. The quarters, which consist of four adjacent rooms, bear importance not in terms of architecture, but with respect to an event that saved a prince's life. After rebels killed Selim III, they entered the Harem in order to kill Prince Mahmud. Cevri Kalfa hurried to the Apartments of the Princes and brought the prince up to her own quarters. When the rebels realized what had happened, Cevri Kalfa stopped them by throwing hot embers at them and gained time for the prince to flee via the roof. When the prince ascended the throne as Mahmud II, he remembered Cevri Kalfa and made her his prime treasurer. In addition, the sultan had a school in Divanyolu and a mansion on Çamlıca hill built in her name, as an expression of his gratitude. Cevri Kalfa was buried near Queen Mother Nakşidil Sultan, mother of Mahmud II.

## The Aviary and the Harem Gate

The gate which is used as the Harem exit today is known as the Aviary Gate. The Aviary, which looks like a large bird's house, is located opposite this gate. In spite of the name, it is thought to be a catering room where the meals cooked for the sultan were brought before they were served. The epigraph over the Aviary Gate reveals that Mahmud I had the catering room repaired. The servants who worked at the Aviary were titled "bird-keepers." The servants resided in the small two-storey structure nearby, which was used as a pharmacy in later periods.

## The Tiled Pavilion: Çinili Köþk

The Tiled Pavilion was built prior to Topkapı Palace, almost to the same

plan as the Yıldırım Mosque in Bursa. When the Archeology Museum was built near it, some of the archeological objects kept in the pavilion were transferred to the museum. The area in front of the building was used for practicing archery. During the restorations in the Republican Era, several pieces of arrows and a kind of spear (cirit) were found there. The pavilion, decorations of which bear Seljuk influence, has rare tiles. The two-storey building has a little entresol over the door.

# Glossary

Agha (also ağa, pl. ağalar): The title used for the students of the Enderun and eunuchs of the Harem.

Asma al-Husna: The Beautiful Names of God.

Basmala: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate," in Arabic (Bismil-lah ir-rahman ir-rahim).

Birun (the outer palace): The sections of the palace other than the Harem and the Enderun.

Eıd (bayram in Turkish): Any of the two Muslim festivals.

Enderun: The section of the palace where selected pages were trained for the administration of the state and the command of the army.

Harem: The primary section which served as the sultan's private home, and also served as a school where the future wives of the statesmen who were trained and educated in the Enderun were educated.

Huzur Lessons: The lessons in Qur'anic interpretation during the month of Ramadan in the presence of the sultan.

İkbal: A concubine of the sultan.

Ka'ba: The Holy Sanctuary in Mecca.

Kadı (also qadi): A judge administering both Sharia and laws issued by the sultan, also chief administrator of an administrative and judicial district.

Kalfa: A female official at the Harem, ranking after an usta.

Nizam-ı Cedid (The New Order): The new army that was established by Selim III as part of his military reforms.

Sheıkh-ul-Islam: The leading religious authority.

Tarawıh prayer: The special prayer that is performed every night during Ramadan.

Usta: A senior female official at the Harem.

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